PATTERNS OF POWER · THE AMERICO-LIBERIAN REPUBLIC

The Americo-Liberian Republic

The Complete Study · 1822 — 1926 — 1980

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

Held as tested, not revealed.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series.
Primary sources quoted exactly; modern scholarship paraphrased and credited.
Contested figures given as ranges. Nothing reconstructed from memory.

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Preface and Outline

What the study is for, how it was built, and the discipline it holds

The spine

Take the metropole away and see what is left.

Everything this collection has said about colonial rule has assumed one. The robe is cut for the taxpayers who fund the conquest and the young men who man it, and not for the conquered, whose belief the floor does not need. The seam is split by an ocean, and the order's central task is keeping its two ends from meeting. The floor of force is levied at the centre and shipped out. The extraction runs to a capital that can decide, next year, that it wants less — and that is the valve through which most of these orders eventually end.

The Republic of Liberia had none of it. No colonial office, no governor sent from anywhere, no seconded administrators, no garrison drawn from a home army, no parliament to answer to, and no metropolitan public whose belief had to be managed. The private subscription society that founded the settlement dissolved its political connection in 1846 and thereafter had no power over it whatever. The constitution adopted in 1847 provided that none but persons of colour should be admitted to citizenship, and that no person not a citizen might hold real estate. Its signatories were the sons and grandsons of people who had been chattel property in Virginia and Maryland, and several had bought themselves out of it in cash.

That is why this case was chosen: as a control. If the colonial machinery is a metropole's machinery, it should not appear here.

It appears anyway, complete.

Indirect rule through appointed paramount chiefs, inside a provincial hierarchy under district commissioners whose three stated duties were to collect taxes, ensure the supply of contract labour, and keep foreigners out. A hut tax payable in cash by a population that had almost no cash — which was the mechanism and not the flaw, since a cash demand on a cashless people is a labour draft with a receipt. A frontier force recruited from the ruled, posted deliberately outside its own districts, unpaid, and living on what it took. Forced labour on roads, on officials' farms, and in porterage. A dual land tenure: fee simple for the included, and inalienable collective title for everyone else, convertible only upon the government's finding that a tribe had become

sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilisation. Formation withheld from the majority for ninety-seven years. And, in 1926, a million acres for ninety-nine years at six cents the acre, with the government covenanting to encourage, support and assist the lessee's labour supply.

Nobody taught them any of it. Lugard published *The Dual Mandate* in 1922, fourteen years after the Frontier Force was raised and eighteen after the hinterland was reorganised. The apparatus was assembled independently, from scratch, on a coast where three of every five arrivals died within a generation, by people on whom the same apparatus had been used.

The spine of this study is Thomas J. Bryan's, and it is the collection's founding premise arriving at the one case where it cannot be explained away as a European pathology or a white one. **The machinery is not owned by anybody. It is what the position hands to whoever occupies it** — and the evidence is that when the position was occupied by the people it had been used against, they produced it again, faithfully, without a European in the room and without meaning to.

The model's work has been to test that claim against the record and to say where the record refused it. It refused it in several places and the refusals are on the page. The seed that opened this study expected settler mortality of about a fifth in the first generation; the census of 1843 shows three-fifths. It expected the settlers to have reproduced the plantation South; the founding cadre turns out to have been formed in the independent Black congregations of Richmond and Baltimore. And it expected the coup of 1980 to be the case that corrects the paper on how orders change. It is not. It is that paper's own claim, arriving exactly where the paper says to look.

How it was built

One module at a time, verification before writing, over the arc the Field Manual sets out: a landscape and twelve modules, each with a framework function, each required to return a revision or a refinement to the framework rather than merely applying it.

Every load-bearing quotation, date and figure was checked against a source reproducing the primary text before it was written down. Public-domain primary sources are quoted **exactly**, at the length the argument needs, because the precise wording of a legal fiction is the point: the covenant of seisin in the Ducor Contract of December 1821, in which six men who signed with X marks warranted that their land was held "without manner of conditions, limitations, or other matter"; the whole of Jehudi Ashmun's inventory of August 1822, checked against page images of the 1826 printing rather than a machine transcription; the Constitution of 1847 from Huberich's literal reprint of the official text; the Firestone lease and the loan agreement

of 1926 from the American diplomatic record; Lord Lugard in the House of Lords; and a chargé d'affaires' cable of 1930 reporting that soldiers were pillaging Kru towns for a tax the government's own revenue officer knew had already been paid.

Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased and credited, never quoted at length. Where wording or provenance could not be confirmed, the line was dropped or marked as reported rather than guessed, and the chain by which a quotation reached this study is named where it matters. Contested figures are given as ranges. Where nothing was found, the modules say **figures not established** rather than filling the gap, and in a study of this order that phrase appears often, for a reason Module 11 treats as a finding rather than an apology.

Four things this study needed and did not obtain are named on the face of the modules and again at the end. The Liberian Supreme Court decisions holding that the aborigines were entitled to the full protection of the constitution — the single most important unverified item, and the pivot of Module 9 — have not been identified in the reports. The extent of the grant of December 1821 remains open by nearly three orders of magnitude. The report of the League of Nations commission of 1930 has not been read, and four modules rest in part on summaries of it. And the White House memorandum whose title gives Module 10 its name reaches this study at two removes.

The discipline

Legibility is not pardon.

The particular difficulty of this case is not that its founders were hypocrites. It is that they were not. Lott Cary meant it when he said he wanted a country where he would be estimated by his merits and not his complexion. Hilary Teage meant every clause of the Declaration he wrote, and every clause of its grievance list was true. William Tubman meant the unification. The order gave twenty-five acres and a town lot, in fee simple and heritable, to people whose previous legal condition had been to be the object of such a deed — which is the thing America ordered in 1865 and revoked within the year, and it is the largest single entry in the benefit column of this study.

Both columns stand. The deeds were real and the hut tax was real, and the same four clauses of the same constitution produced both. A study that cannot credit what an order actually did has stopped measuring anything; a study that swallows the order's account of itself has stopped being a study.

The arithmetic is laid out. The sum is left to the reader.

The arc

Landscape · The Face and the Free Paper. The ground before the landing — a coast where a man wore his unenslavability on his skin because paper had no force there, and a shipload of people who carried theirs on paper because a face had none in Virginia.

1 · Twenty-Seven, When Not Sick. *The floor of force.* An inventory of twenty-seven men and one gun that could be loaded — and a settlement whose founding violence was supplied, at every decisive moment, by somebody who had come for other reasons and was never billed.

2 · Without Manner of Conditions, Limitations, or Other Matter. *The settlement.* A covenant of seisin signed with six X marks, a heritable freehold conveyed to former chattels, and a constitution that excluded white men by name and the country's majority by no clause at all.

3 · The Native African, Bowing Down With Us. *The robe.* A declaration addressed by name to the nations of Christendom, a grievance list aimed at a country that was not the one being left, and a majority who appear in the founding document once, as a witness to somebody else's achievement.

4 · The Recaptives of the Pons Were Children. *Formation.* Seven hundred and fifty-six children off a slave ship, formed so completely that their name became the name of the ruling caste — and the people ninety miles inland, left to Poro for ninety-seven years.

5 · The Money Has Already Been Collected. *The cost column.* Why a farmer, a boatman, a tapper and a poor settler each complied — and what happens to compliance when the men sent to collect a tax are not paid and the tax cannot be satisfied by paying it.

6 · For the Further Security of the Revenues and Receipts. *Extraction.* A loan contract, drawn in New York, in which the force that collected the hut tax appears as collateral, and a lease that obliged the lessor to borrow.

7 · Drawn Up by the President of Liberia Himself. *Information and suppression.* An order that could not censor its audience because its audience lived abroad, and what it did instead: wrote the terms of the inquiry into itself, and prosecuted the witnesses.

8 · During the Pleasure of the President. *Elite coordination and the default.* A hierarchy too poor to pay anybody, distributing the one asset it had in unlimited supply — and the reason that asset could never be shared out.

9 · During Good Behaviour, At His Pleasure. *Plurality or foreclosure.* A bill of rights that reads as an inventory of what had been done to the men who signed it; a

court that could not be dismissed and found for the powerless; and the clause forty pages later that gave the President its bailiffs.

10 · Looking Beyond President Tolbert. *Change and collapse.* Seventeen men with rifles, a crowd that was fired on and changed nothing, and a patron who had supplied the decisive violence at every crisis since 1822 and this time supplied none.

11 · Twenty-Seven Bodies, and the Seed Rice. *The grim accounting.* A ledger that cannot be totalled because nobody counted, a metabolic note of a kind the framework has not yet named, and a forgetting that could never be completed.

12 · Some Time With Me in Nigeria. *Convergence and divergence.* Lugard, who counted seventeen conquests of Hausaland before his own, giving evidence on Liberia to the House of Lords. The strongest case for the thing, stated at full strength and answered.

LANDSCAPE

The Face and the Free Paper

The landscape module: a coast where a man wore his unenslavability on his skin because paper had no force there, an initiation order that a Dutch geographer had already put into print a century and a half before the landing, and a society founded in Washington whose constitution proposed to remove a population with its consent and did not use the word slavery once.

Two certificates of the same fact

Begin with two documents that were not both documents.

Along the stretch of West African coast that Europeans had been calling the Grain Coast since the fifteenth century, a man of the seafaring communities the traders lumped together as Kru wore an indigo stripe running from the hairline down the forehead to the bridge of the nose. Historians disagree about how the mark did its work — whether by reputation, because Kru men were worth more to a captain as crew than as cargo; whether by the ferocity with which capture was resisted; whether by an accumulated commercial understanding that the people who worked the surfboats were not to be taken. Kru oral tradition holds simply that the Kru were never enslaved. What is not in dispute is the mark itself and what kind of object it was: permanent, unforgeable, worn on the body, and legible across water to a stranger who spoke no Kru and had no reason to trust anything the man said. Those are precisely the properties a certificate is supposed to have. On a coast with no registry, no clerk and no court to which a captured man could appeal, they were properties no piece of paper could possibly have had.

Four thousand miles west and a little north, the Commonwealth of Virginia had answered the identical question in the opposite medium. On 10 December 1793 the General Assembly passed an act to restrain the practice of negroes going at large, which provided that every free negro or mulatto residing or employed within any city, borough or town "shall be registered and numbered in a book to be kept for that purpose by the clerk of the said city, borough or town, which register shall specify his or her age, name, colour and stature, by whom and in what court the said negro or mulatto was emancipated; or that such negro or mulatto was born free," with a copy to be delivered annually to the person registered. The requirement was extended to the counties in 1803. Forty-one years after the original act, in 1834, the Assembly made it a

uniform obligation for the clerk to record the individual's identifying marks and scars along with the instrument of emancipation, whether deed or will.

Set the two beside each other and the symmetry is exact and slightly vertiginous. In Virginia the paper described the body, and by 1834 the law required that it describe the body precisely, because a paper unanchored to a body is worth nothing and can be sold, borrowed or forged. On the Grain Coast the body *was* the paper. Both instruments existed to answer the same question, which is the only question that mattered in the Atlantic world either of them belonged to — *is this man property?* — and each was cut to fit the field its bearer had to move through. Neither was a superstition and neither was a crude substitute for the other. Each was the correct engineering solution to the problem as it presented itself locally.

On 25 April 1822, on a headland that Portuguese sailors had named Cape Mesurado in the 1560s, the two instruments came ashore in the same place, carried by people who had no way of recognising that they were the same instrument. What follows in this study is very largely the working out of that failure of recognition, at a hundred and fifty-eight years' length.

A conquest you can date from a Dutch book

The settlers did not land on an aboriginal coast, and the point can be made here with unusual precision, because the order they found had been described in print in Amsterdam a hundred and fifty-four years before the first of them stepped onto Providence Island.

The forest belt behind the Grain Coast had been filling up for centuries by way of migration and conquest from the north and east. The peoples the modern count divides into sixteen groups fall into three language families — Mel, of which the Gola and Kissi are generally reckoned the oldest presence; Kwa, which includes the Bassa, Kru, Grebo and Krahn of the coast and the south-east; and Mande, whose speakers, among them the Vai, Kpelle, Loma, Gbandi, Mano, Gio and Mandingo, pressed south and west out of the savanna in successive waves associated with the fortunes of the Mali empire and its successors. The most violent phase of that pressure, the sixteenth-century incursions that Portuguese sources call the Mane, is one of the more disputed episodes in West African historiography — scholars divide sharply over how many invasions there were, who the invaders were and where they came from — and this study takes no position beyond the fact of the movement and its direction.

What the movement carried, or found, or amplified, is the institution that matters most to everything that follows. Poro is the men's initiation and governing association of the region; Sande, called Bondo in some districts, is the women's. Together they took

children out of the villages into the bush at the threshold of adulthood, held them there for weeks or months, put them through an ordeal and a curriculum, gave them new names, and returned them as persons of a different legal and social kind — and they did this across ethnic and linguistic boundaries, so that a Gola and a Kpelle and a Vai initiated in the same season stood in a relation to one another that no chief and no lineage had created. Poro carried judicial and military authority in the districts where it ran, including, on the ethnographic testimony, authority over life and death. Among the Mende of Sierra Leone, into the twentieth century, a man who was not a member could not hold authority at all.

The attribution of Poro's origin to the Mande expansion is common in the literature and is not securely dated; estimates range from around AD 1000 to the sixteenth-century invasions, and the anthropological tradition that runs through Warren d'Azevedo locates Sande's origin among the Gola before its spread to the Mende and Vai. What is firm is the terminus. In 1668 the Amsterdam geographer Olfert Dapper, who never left the Netherlands and worked from Dutch West India Company reports that have since disappeared, published a description of the Cape Mount region which included the women's association; the first-hand account behind it appears to date from about 1628. So the institution was running, and running in a form a European recognised and wrote down, at least two centuries before the first settler ship anchored — and the whole of that two centuries is a minimum, not an estimate.

This is the ordinary recursion and it should be stated once, plainly, and then left to do its work. The order the settlers met was not timeless. It had a history, it had displaced things, and some of the peoples living under it in 1822 were descended from people it had conquered. But by 1822 nobody alive on that coast experienced Poro as a policy or Sande as an arrangement. They were what growing up consisted of. A boy did not decide to be initiated any more than he decided to learn to speak, and the authority of the men who ran the bush was not an authority he had granted. Saying that this began as somebody's conquest is not a way of taking it from the people who held it. It is the opposite. A thing that was built and then became genuinely real is more durable than any lie, and it is worth the dating here for one reason only: the contrast this study exists to measure is between an order so deeply installed that it needed no policing and an order about to be laid over it that would never install itself at all, and would spend a century and a half paying the difference.

Authority that never pooled

Now the fact that would cost the settlers the most, and which they were slower to understand than the men in Washington were.

There was no throne on the Grain Coast. In the summary the anthropological literature has settled on, the indigenous polities of the region were seldom more centralised than confederacies of quasi-autonomous chiefdoms, and the larger the political unit, the less likely it was to be ethnically homogeneous — two or more language communities coexisting under the chiefly lineage of one of them, with bilingualism common and intermarriage unremarkable. Authority ran through lineage seniority, through the councils of elders, through control of land allocation, and above all through Poro, whose writ crossed the very boundaries a stranger would have wanted to use as a map. There was no office an outsider could occupy. There was no revenue machine to capture. There was no man whose word could deliver a district and keep it delivered.

Land was the same problem in another form. It was not held as a thing that could be handed over. It was held as a relation among persons — an allocation made by elders to lineages, defended collectively, and carrying with it a set of obligations to the living and to the dead who had cleared it. This is not a claim that the people of the coast were ignorant of property; they had been buying and selling goods with Europeans for three hundred and sixty years and were, on the evidence of the prices they extracted, extremely good at it. It is a claim about what kind of object land was in their hands. A parcel that is a relation cannot be alienated, because there is nothing to hand across. The Dei–Gola–settler fighting of 1832, the Kru disputes of the 1830s and the Grebo actions of the 1850s were all fought, in part, on the proposition that what the settlers had acquired was a use of ground for as long as they needed it, and not a country for ever.

There was one exception, and it is large enough that this study will have to keep returning to it. Inland from Cape Mount, at Bopolu, the confederation the sources call Condo — a Mandingo word the local tradition glosses as the putting together of heads — had assembled Gola, Vai, Dei, Kpelle, Fula and Malinke under Malinke leadership into a body that controlled the trade routes from the interior to the Atlantic: ivory, gold, kola, camwood, pepper and slaves moving down, salt, iron, guns and cloth moving up. Under Sao Boso, whom the settlers called Boatswain and who had reportedly acquired the name working the slave vessels, Condo could, on the estimate that circulates in the standard accounts, put something on the order of eight thousand men with muskets into the field. That figure is a report and should be treated as one. What is better attested is what he did with the position: in 1822, when the settlement

at Cape Mesurado was in open conflict with Zolu Duma and the other rulers of the cape, Sao Boso came down from Bopolu and mediated. He did not destroy the colony, which he could very probably have done. He arbitrated for it.

The shape that leaves is worth holding, because it is not the shape either of the classic indirect-rule conquest or of the classic settler clearance. Along several hundred miles of coast and forest there was no seat a stranger could sit down in, and therefore no cheap purchase of an existing hierarchy — but there was, one hundred miles inland, a single regional power with the capacity to extinguish the settlement in its first year and an interest in keeping it alive as a trading counterparty. The colony survived its infancy partly because the only man on the coast with an army large enough to end it preferred it standing.

The institution for receiving strangers

And here is the thing the coast had that the framework's existing colonial cases have not had to look for, because in those cases it was not there.

Along the whole Upper Guinea littoral, contact with outsiders had itself become an institution. The relation the ethnographic literature calls landlord and stranger governed how an incoming person of any origin — another lineage's man, a Mandingo trader, a Portuguese factor, a Dutch supercargo — was received. The landlord's authority derived from being the first-settled, the autochthon, the one whose ancestors had cleared the ground; the stranger received lodging, protection, the right to trade and often a wife, and owed in return loyalty, deference and a share. The arrangement was not charity and it was not a courtesy the newcomer might decline. It was how the newcomer got standing at all. It was renewable, it was inheritable, and — this is the operative clause — it did not extinguish the landlord's underlying claim to the ground. A stranger who had been received, however long ago and however prosperously, remained a stranger in the sense that mattered, which is that his position rested on a continuing relation with a host rather than on a title he owned outright.

The Kru had built a maritime version of the same thing. Recruitment for European ships ran through headmen, men with previous shipboard experience who assembled a gang, contracted on its behalf, kept the discipline and took a share — so that a captain wanting thirty hands did not hire thirty individuals but dealt with one man who could deliver them and stand behind them. Portuguese and Dutch accounts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onward describe the surfboats coming out through the break to a newly anchored ship, and the whole apparatus of transferring goods and people between deck and shore that no European could perform for himself.

So the coast the American Colonization Society approached in 1821 was not, in the relevant sense, an unadministered one. It had a fully developed, centuries-old, locally universal law of how to admit a foreigner, extract value from him, and keep him. What it did not have was any provision for the one thing the Society wanted, which was ground held in perpetuity against everybody including the host.

The factories that had been burned

One more fact about the specific headland, because the site was not chosen at random and its recent history was not neutral.

Cape Mesurado had been a base for the slave trade after that trade became illegal for British and American subjects. In 1815 the Governor of Sierra Leone sent an armed force there to break it up, seizing ships and goods and taking the enslaved people who were being held in the factories; the two proprietors, Robert Bostock and John McQueen, were sentenced by the vice-admiralty court at Freetown to fourteen years' transportation to New South Wales. Immediately north, at the Gallinas, the traffic was about to enter its most profitable phase: the Spanish trader Pedro Blanco began operating there in the same year the settlers landed and ran a network supplying Cuba and Brazil for the better part of two decades, in partnership with the Vai ruler the sources call King Siaka.

That is the commercial weather of the coast in 1821. And it bears directly on the founding transaction, because on the reading of the historian who recovered the founding document, the objection the American negotiators met was not principally about price or about land. Some of the men on the cape had made money selling captured people, and the arrival of a colony under the guns of an American anti-slaving cruiser was a threat to that business; the sticking point in four days of talks was the slave trade. The men who did sign, on this account, were the ones who had concluded that the traffic was finishing and that a permanent trading counterparty was worth more than a declining commerce. Whether that reading holds is a matter for the module that takes the deed apart. What can be said here is that the headland was not empty scenery. It was a contested piece of commercial infrastructure whose most recent proprietors had been transported to Australia seven years before.

The room on Pennsylvania Avenue

Now the other society, and the instrument that produced it.

On 21 December 1816, at Davis's Hotel in Washington, a meeting convened at the instance of Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey, with Henry Clay,

Speaker of the House, in the chair. The men in the room and those who joined within the month included Bushrod Washington of the Supreme Court, who became the society's first president; Elias B. Caldwell, clerk of the Court; Francis Scott Key; Daniel Webster; John Randolph of Roanoke; and Charles Fenton Mercer. They agreed on very little. The evangelical wing believed a colony in Africa would give free black Americans a full humanity the United States withheld from them and would carry Protestant Christianity to the continent. The Virginia and Maryland planters had a different calculation, which they did not much trouble to conceal: a growing free black population inside a slave society is a standing refutation of the argument that slavery is the natural condition of black people, and its removal would make the institution safer. Clay's remark at that meeting, that colonisation would rid the country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous, portion of its population, is quoted in that form throughout the modern literature; it reaches this study at second hand and is marked as such.

A week later, on Saturday 28 December, the adjourned meeting assembled in the Hall of the House of Representatives and adopted a constitution. Its first two articles are the founding instrument of everything that follows, and they should be read exactly.

> *Article I. — This Society shall be called "THE American Society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States."*
> *Article II. — The object to which attention is to be exclusively directed, is to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the free people of color, residing in our country, in Africa, or such other places as Congress shall deem most expedient. And the Society shall act, to effect this object, in co-operation with the general government, and such of the states as may adopt regulations upon the subject.*

Two features of that drafting are worth taking slowly, because between them they explain how a body containing both abolitionists and slaveholders held together for a generation.

The first is the parenthesis. *With their consent* is the whole moral architecture of the enterprise in three words, and it is doing something particular: it converts a proposal to remove a population into a proposal to assist a population that wishes to leave, and by doing so makes it possible for a man who believes removal is monstrous and a man who believes removal is urgent to sign the same page. It is also, as the next month would demonstrate, a factual claim about a state of the world that nobody in the room had checked.

The second is the silence. The article states an object to which attention is to be *exclusively* directed, and that object is the free population. Slavery is not mentioned. It is not defended, not condemned, not regulated, not even named. A reader who did not know the country would not learn from the text what the argument was about. This is the same drafting technique the American constitutional settlement had used thirty years earlier when it wrote *such persons* and *other persons* and *person held to service or labour* rather than the word everyone understood — and it works for the same reason, which is that a clause need not name a thing in order to be about it. The exclusivity is not an evasion of the subject. It is the mechanism by which two irreconcilable purposes were both accommodated, because whatever the Society did with free people, it had bound itself in advance to do nothing whatever about the four million who were not free.

The answer from Bethel, and from Richmond

The parenthesis was tested within four weeks, and the reply is the sharpest structural analysis anyone produced of the American Colonization Society, including by the Society's later critics.

On 15 January 1817 something approaching three thousand black men filled Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. James Forten, the sailmaker, presided; Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and John Gloucester, three of the most respected ministers in the country, spoke in favour of emigration. When Forten put the question in favour, not one voice answered. When he put it against, the whole room answered at once. The resolutions the meeting adopted opened by asserting a claim in the ground itself — that their ancestors, not of choice, had been the first cultivators of the wilds of America, and that they, their descendants, felt themselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil — and went on to the sentence that has outlived everything else said that day: "Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong." (The preamble circulates in two forms, one describing the ancestors as the first cultivators and one as the first successful cultivators; the variation is noted and neither is load-bearing.)

Nine days later, on 24 January, a meeting of free people of colour in Richmond took a different line to the same end. They granted that colonisation might benefit some of their number; they had a proposal of their own. "We prefer being colonized in the most remote corner of the land of our nativity," they resolved, "to being exiled to a foreign country" — and they asked Congress for a portion of its own territory, on the Missouri or elsewhere, on whatever terms the government thought fit.

Read those two documents as a pair and what they contain is not sentiment but arithmetic. The Philadelphia meeting had identified, within a month of the Society's founding, the structural function the removal of free black people would perform for slavery, and had refused to perform it. The Richmond meeting had accepted the offer's premise and located the fraud in a single word — not *colonized*, which they did not object to, but *foreign*. Both had understood the parenthesis better than the men who drafted it, and both had answered the only question the parenthesis actually asked. The consent was not there.

Between 1820 and 1904 something on the order of sixteen thousand people went anyway. Establishing who they were, and why the answer changes across the decades, is the last thing this opening has to do.

What the emigrants carried

The men who founded the settlement's institutions were not planters' field hands and they were not free-born Northerners. They came out of a third place, and it is a place with an address.

Lott Cary was born enslaved in Charles City County, Virginia, around 1780, and was sent in his twenties to work in a tobacco warehouse at Shockoe in Richmond, where he rose to a supervisory position and was permitted to keep something out of what he earned. He joined the First Baptist Church of Richmond in 1807. He taught himself to read; a white Baptist deacon, William Crane, ran an evening school for the leading men of the black congregation from about 1815, and Cary, by Crane's own later account, put more life into it than anyone. Around 1813 he bought his own freedom and that of his children for a sum given in the sources as about eight hundred and fifty dollars. In 1815 he was among the founders of the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society. His friend Colin Teague was a saddler who had likewise purchased himself. In January 1821, in an upper room of Crane's house, Cary and Teague and their wives and Teague's sixteen-year-old son Hilary and one other couple constituted themselves as a church before they sailed — so that the first Baptist congregation in Liberia existed as a body in Richmond before it existed in Africa. Daniel Coker, one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, had already gone out with the first company on the *Elizabeth* in 1820.

Asked why he was leaving a position in which he was respected and comfortable, Cary is reported to have replied: "I am an African, and in this country, however meritorious my conduct, and respectable my character, I cannot receive the credit due to either. I wish to go to a country where I shall be estimated by my merits, not by my complexion; and I feel bound to labor for my suffering race." The words come through

Cary's associates and are given in his 1922 biographer's own words as something he is *reported* to have said; they are used here with that chain named.

Look at what is in that paragraph, because it is the answer to a question this study has to settle before it can say anything about what was reproduced on the Grain Coast. The transmitting institutions are the independent black congregation, the missionary society, the night school and the self-purchase. Not the big house. These were men whose formation ran through a church they had built themselves under a regime that criminalised much of what the church did, and whose freedom was a commercial transaction they had financed out of hired-out wages over a decade. When they arrived on a coast without a state and set about constituting one, the forms nearest to hand were the forms of a congregation and a benevolent society: a covenant, a subscription, an election of officers, a written constitution, and a sharp boundary between the members and everyone else.

But the founding cadre is not the population, and the population changed. The best current reconstruction of the emigration, Leigh Gardner's compiled dataset of 16,332 individuals who went out between 1820 and 1904, shows three movements across the century. From the beginning, only a small share came from the northern states, and that share fell further as the Society became more controversial among free black communities in the North. The Virginia and Maryland preponderance of the early decades was progressively overtaken by the lower South. And the legal status of the emigrants shifted decisively: the original object had been free-born people, but from the 1830s an increasing proportion were people emancipated on the express condition that they leave, with literacy among the enslaved-born running at about one in ten against a much higher rate in the earliest cohorts.

So the seed of this study's expectation — that the settlers reproduced the plantation South — is half right in a way that matters, and the halves run in opposite directions across time. The *forms* the order took were built in the 1820s and 1830s by men formed in the black church and the mutual-aid society of the urban Upper South. The *population* those forms had to govern became, decade by decade, poorer, less literate, more southern, and composed increasingly of people whose passage was the price of their freedom. An order whose institutions were designed by a self-selecting, literate, covenanting minority and then inherited by a much larger group with none of that formation is a different object from a plantation transplanted, and the divergence between the two is one of the things the later modules will have to measure rather than assume.

What nobody counted

Two sets of numbers close this opening, and the honest thing about both is how bad they are.

On the settlers, the record is good and the news is terrible. Of the roughly four thousand five hundred emigrants who reached Liberia between 1820 and 1843 — the figure is given as 4,472 in Antonio McDaniel's demographic reconstruction and as 4,571 in other tabulations of the same rolls — the Liberian census of September 1843 found 1,819 alive. Something close to three of every five people who made the voyage in the first generation were dead within it, overwhelmingly of malaria, against which West African–born populations carried acquired immunity the American-born did not. McDaniel's finding is that this is the highest mortality recorded for any settlement under modern record-keeping, and that it had nothing to do with the settlers' ancestry and everything to do with the distance between the disease environment they left and the one they entered.

On the people already there, the record is close to nothing. Nobody counted the population of the Grain Coast in 1822 and nobody counted it for a long time afterwards. The figures that circulate — some tens of thousands on the coastal strip, some hundreds of thousands in the interior, and the celebrated ratio by which the settler community never exceeded about five per cent of the whole — are estimates built on other estimates, and the five per cent in particular is a proportion between one number that was counted and one that was not. This study will use it where it must, always as a range and always with that provenance stated. It is worth naming the asymmetry rather than smoothing it, because it is itself a structural fact about the order being examined: from the first year, this was a polity that knew to the individual how many of its own people had died and had no idea at all how many people lived in the country it claimed.

The distance this study will measure

Set the two landscapes side by side and the shape of what follows stands up.

On the ground, a society whose formation had gone so deep that it required no state to maintain it and admitted no stranger to its interior; whose authority had never pooled into anything a newcomer could occupy; whose land was a relation and not a thing; and which had nonetheless spent three and a half centuries perfecting an institution for receiving foreigners, extracting value from them and keeping them subordinate — with a regional trading power a hundred miles inland strong enough to end the settlement and disinclined to.

Arriving on it, a few dozen people at a time, a population formed in the most surveilled corner of the American slave society, carrying the covenant, the subscription list and the written constitution as the only technology of collective self-government they had ever been permitted to practise; sent by a body whose founding article proposed to remove them with their consent and had never asked for it; and dying at a rate that would have closed any commercial venture in a season.

And between them, on 15 December 1821, a single sheet of paper written on both sides in a physician's careful hand, signed by two Americans and six men the document calls kings, in which both parties undertook to live in peace and friendship for ever. The sellers, on everything known about how that coast conducted business, had received a stranger. The buyers believed they had bought a country. Neither party was deceived about the facts and neither was a fool. They had performed two different transactions with one instrument, and only one of the two was written down.

Reading the two landscapes against the framework

Three returns: one contribution, one correction the evidence forced, and one question this opening is not entitled to answer.

The contribution. Where a conquered order has already institutionalised the reception of strangers, the conqueror's founding fiction does not have to manufacture consent, because a real and locally valid form of consent is genuinely on offer — and the fiction's work moves from the moment of agreement to the language the agreement is recorded in. The collection's account of a settlement instrument has so far run on conversions performed by statute: an occupation declared a vacancy, a collective holding declared partible, an office declared an estate. Each of those is a conqueror overwriting a reality with an assertion, and each is legible as such because the assertion is on the face of the instrument. Nothing of that kind is required here. The landlord–stranger relation is a real institution, freely entered, understood by both sides, with obligations flowing in both directions, and a man received under it has genuinely agreed to something. The conversion is performed instead by *recording* it — by writing a revocable, relational, host-and-guest arrangement into a form of words that a court in another hemisphere will read as an alienation in fee, and by writing it in a language only one party can read. The transfer is not the act; the transcription is the act. Which suggests that the collection's clause about the language of an instrument deciding which version is real — the provision that the English text shall prevail, appearing in agreements twenty-eight years and two continents apart — is not a late imperial refinement but the primitive form of the settlement fiction, and that the elaborate statutory conversions may be what a conqueror reaches for only where no

indigenous institution of hospitality exists to be transcribed. That is a proposition this study can test against a document that has been recovered and can be read, and it will be tested in the module that takes the deed apart.

The correction. The seed carried into this study expected the settlers to be reproducing the plantation, and the founding evidence does not supply that. The men who built the institutions had been formed in the independent black congregation, the missionary society and the evening school of the urban Upper South, and several of them had purchased themselves out of hired-out wages. That is a formation built from a substrate under surveillance rather than a robe inherited whole — which is precisely what the study of the post-emancipation American South found when it looked for an inherited counter-formation among the freedpeople and did not find one. The finding here is therefore not that a slave order's furniture was carried across an ocean and rebuilt with the same people in the other chair, but something narrower and stranger: that the organisational forms available to a people denied every other form of collective self-government were the forms of a covenanted congregation, and that a covenanted congregation is an instrument with a membership roll and a boundary. What that boundary did when it was made the boundary of a state is the question, and the answer will not be found by assuming a plantation.

The question left open. What a settler order does for a robe when there is nobody with the power to revoke its licence cannot be read from this opening, and may not be readable at all until the modules that follow. The Society was not a chartered company answerable to a state; its instrument was its own constitution, adopted by acclamation in a room, and the ground it acquired was covered by no papal grant, allotted at no conference, and mandated by no league. The founding transaction was a private contract between an American physician, a naval lieutenant acting outside any commission to acquire territory, and six men on a headland. Whom, in that configuration, does a legitimating account have to satisfy? The Society's American subscribers are the obvious first answer and are probably right for the first two decades. But subscribers can stop subscribing without anyone's colony ceasing to exist, which is a different kind of hold from the one a chartered body lives under, and the difference is the whole reason this case was chosen. The module on the floor of force has to establish who could have ended this thing in 1822 and by what means, before the module on the robe can establish who it was talking to.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. The constitution of the American Colonization Society, articles I and II, adopted at the adjourned meeting in the Hall of

the House of Representatives on 28 December 1816, is quoted from the text printed in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 3 January 1817, as reproduced in the Ruhr-Universität Bochum documentary collection; I have not collated it against the Society's own first annual report of 1818 and the exact punctuation should be checked against that printing before it is relied on further. The Virginia act of 10 December 1793, "An Act ... to restrain the practice of negroes going at large," is quoted from the transcription published by the Virginia Genealogical Society and corroborated in the Library of Virginia's descriptive notes for the free negro registers; the underlying text is in Hening's *Statutes at Large* and I have not seen it there. The resolutions of the meeting of free people of colour at Bethel Church, Philadelphia, 15 January 1817, and of the meeting at Richmond, 24 January 1817, are quoted as printed in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization* (Boston, 1832), which is the standard public-domain vehicle for both; the Philadelphia preamble circulates in two readings, "the first cultivators" and "the first successful cultivators," and the variance is reported rather than resolved.

Reported rather than quoted, and flagged as such. Henry Clay's remark at the founding meeting of 21 December 1816 about ridding the country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous, portion of its population is quoted in that form throughout the modern literature; I have not seen the printed proceedings of that meeting and it reaches this study at second hand. Lott Cary's statement beginning "I am an African" is given as reported: his 1922 biographer Miles Mark Fisher, whose article in the *Journal of Negro History* is public domain, introduces it as something Cary "is reported to have answered," and the report descends through William Crane and R. R. Gurley rather than from Cary's own hand. The undertaking in the Cape Mesurado contract of December 1821 that the parties would live in peace and friendship for ever is quoted from the account of the document's recovery published in *Smithsonian* magazine in 2022; the contract's own text was printed in American newspapers in 1822 and must be obtained and quoted directly in the module on the settlement, not from a modern summary. The description of Sao Boso's forces at some eight thousand men with muskets is a report circulating in the standard accounts and is not a count.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the recovery of the Cape Mesurado contract in the Elias B. Caldwell papers at the Chicago History Museum, its authorship in Eli Ayres's hand rather than Robert Stockton's, the six named signatories, and the argument that the sellers were experienced Atlantic bargainers whose objection concerned the slave trade rather than the price: C. Patrick Burrowes, as reported in the 2022 *Smithsonian* account of his find and in his Library of

Congress presentation. For the demography of the emigration — 16,332 individuals recorded between 1820 and 1904, the small and falling northern share, the shift from the Chesapeake to the lower South, the rising proportion emancipated on condition of departure, and literacy of about ten per cent among the enslaved-born: Leigh Gardner's dataset article in the *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* (2024), drawing on the earlier compilations of Tom Shick, Robert T. Brown and Peter Murdza, and standing behind her *Sovereignty without Power* (2022). For settler mortality: Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* (1995). For the structure of indigenous polities as confederacies of quasi-autonomous chiefdoms and for Sande's origin among the Gola: Warren d'Azevedo, as summarised in the standard reference literature. For the Condo federation: Svend Holsoe's study of it and the accounts that descend from him. For the landlord–stranger relation: George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers* (1993), and Bruce Mouser's 1975 article on it as a process of accommodation and assimilation. For the Kru mark and Kru maritime recruitment through headmen: the recent *Journal of African History* treatment of Kru mariners and the older compendium by George Brooks. For the destruction of the slave factories at Cape Mesurado in 1815 and the sentences passed on Bostock and McQueen: Tara Helfman's account of the vice-admiralty court at Sierra Leone.

Contested and unresolved, and named so that the next module inherits the problem rather than the guess. The extent of the tract acquired in December 1821 is given in the sources at figures that differ by nearly three orders of magnitude — about 140 acres in the scholarship around the recovered document, a strip thirty-six miles by three in the older accounts, and sixty miles of coast between the Mesurado and Junk rivers in another. That must be resolved against the deed's own metes and not averaged. Whether the signature was obtained under the threat of a firearm is likewise contested: the story is long-established and is asserted flatly in much of the literature, and the historian who found the document argues against it. Neither claim is adopted here. The origin and dating of Poro is unsettled, with attributions to the Mande expansion ranging from around AD 1000 to the sixteenth century; only the 1668 publication date and the roughly 1628 date of the account behind it are treated as firm. No reliable count of the population of the Grain Coast exists for 1822 or for a long time after, and the ratio of settlers to indigenous inhabitants that appears throughout the literature is a proportion between a counted number and an uncounted one.

MODULE 1

Twenty-Seven, When Not Sick

Module 1: the floor of force — an inventory of twenty-seven men and one gun that could be loaded, two assaults survived, and a settlement whose founding violence was supplied, at every decisive moment, by somebody who had come for other reasons.

The inventory

On 18 August 1822, ten days after taking charge at Cape Mesurado and four months after the settlers had come ashore, the colonial agent Jehudi Ashmun sat down and counted what he had. He published the count four years later, in a book printed in Washington at the Society's expense and compiled, as its title page says, from the authentic records of the colony. It is the most useful single paragraph in the founding record, and it should be read at length rather than summarised, because every clause of it is a fact about a floor.

> *Of the native Americans, 27, when not sick, were able to bear arms; but they were wholly untrained to their use; and capable in their present undisciplined state of making but a very feeble defence indeed. There were 40 muskets in store, which, with repairing, were capable of being rendered serviceable. Of 1 brass, and 5 iron guns attached to the settlement, the last only was fit for service, and four of the former required carriages. Several of these were nearly buried in the mud on the opposite side of the river. Not a yard of abattis, or other fence-work had been constructed. There was no fixed ammunition; nor, without great difficulty and delay, was it possible to load the only gun which was provided with a sufficient carriage.*

Twenty-seven men who could carry a musket if they were not ill, none of whom had been trained; forty muskets that would work after repair; six guns of which one could be fired and four had no carriages and several were in the mud on the wrong side of a river; no earthworks at all; no made-up cartridge. The organised violence available to the Republic of Liberia's founding settlement, three months after its agents had performed the ceremony of taking possession of the Cape and country, was one loadable cannon.

What Ashmun did next is worth recording because it identifies who was actually going to hold the ground. "In the organization of the men," he writes, "thirteen African youths attached to the United States' Agency, most of whom had never loaded a

musket, were enrolled in the lieutenant's corps, and daily exercised in the use of arms." Thirteen local boys, added to twenty-seven sick Americans, is the whole of it. By November the settlement's fighting strength, on Ashmun's own return, "amounted to 35 persons, including 6 native youths not 16 years of age." The plan of defence he then designed — five heavy guns at the angles of a triangle enclosing the town, each covered by a musket-proof stockade, with a brass piece and two swivels on travelling carriages held in the centre as a reserve — was drawn for a garrison that did not exist, by a man who had been in the country for a fortnight, against an attack he could see coming.

What the climate did before anyone fired

The floor was being consumed faster than it could be landed, and it had been from the first ship.

The *Elizabeth* sailed from New York in the first week of February 1820 — the sources give 5 February and 6 February and count the emigrants at eighty-six and at eighty-eight — carrying free black Americans under three white agents, Samuel Bacon and John P. Bankson for the United States government and Samuel A. Crozer for the Society, with the sloop-of-war *Cyane* as escort. They were landed at Campelar on Sherbro Island, in territory the Society did not own, on ground prepared by John Kizell, himself a former South Carolina slave settled on the island. By May all three agents and something on the order of twenty-two colonists were dead of fever. The survivors were taken in by the British at Fourah Bay. The *Nautilus* arrived in 1821 with a further thirty-odd settlers and more agents, several of whom died in their turn. No land had been acquired. Two years, three ships, and the expedition's entire command structure had been spent before there was a colony to defend.

Then 1822, in Ashmun's own record of the season. Twenty men were detailed for the nightly watch after 31 August. On 1 September, twelve of the newest arrivals were wholly disabled; the burdens thrown onto the others "accelerated the work of the climate so rapidly, that on the 10th of this month, of the whole expedition, only two remained fit for any kind of service." Ashmun himself was attacked with fever in his third week ashore and spent four weeks in delirium; his wife Catherine died on 15 September. The native youths whose residence on the Cape had been treated as security for their people's good behaviour were, he notes, "daily deserting."

The aggregate is the worst in the collection and probably the worst on record. Of the roughly four and a half thousand emigrants landed between 1820 and 1843 — 4,472 on Antonio McDaniel's reconstruction, 4,571 in other tabulations of the same rolls — the Liberian census of September 1843 found 1,819 alive.

Set that beside the other cases in this corpus and one difference organises everything. Elsewhere a floor consumed by climate is a garrison, and a garrison is replaceable: the metropole levies more men, ships them out, and enters the loss in a column that is not the same column as the colony's population. Here there was no garrison. The men who died were the settlement. The casualty return and the census were the same document, and the body that was sending replacements was a private subscription society dependent on donations from American churches. **A floor that is identical with the population it protects cannot absorb a loss, because every loss subtracts from both sides of the ledger at once.**

The umpire

The settlement survived its first year anyway, and the reason is in Ashmun's book, stated by Ashmun, in terms he plainly found theologically satisfying and did not find strategically embarrassing.

Some months before the fighting, the Dey rulers around the Cape had refused to deliver possession of the land the December contract covered. The old chief the settlers called Ba Caia, whose town lay close enough that the colonists "could at any hour lay it in ashes," was caught between them and his neighbours, and appealed to his ally inland. That ally was the man the sources call Sao Boso and the settlers called Boatswain — the Malinke head of the Condo confederation at Bopolu, whose power, Ashmun writes, "had been often felt by the maritime tribes," and whose general influence "gave him, even in the affairs of his neighbours, an authority little short of dictatorial." Ashmun's footnote portrait of him is admiring in the way a man is admiring of a weapon he has just been handed: a stature approaching seven feet, a countenance noble and full of animation, great comprehension and activity of mind, and a savage loftiness of sentiment — "He is prodigal of every thing except the means of increasing the terror of his name."

He came down to the Montserado, Ashmun records, "not, as he said, to pronounce sentence, between the coast people and the strangers, but to do justice: and he had actually brought along with him a force sufficient to carry his decisions into immediate effect." He convoked the head chiefs of the neighbourhood by direct exertion of authority, sent for the agents and principal settlers, heard the complaint — that the Deys had withheld possession of lands they had sold, and that king George had committed acts of hostility with his superiors' consent — sat through a noisy discussion in which he declined to take any part, and then stood up and ended it:

That having sold their country, and accepted the payment in part, they must take the consequences. Their refusal of the balance of the purchase money, did not annul, or affect the bargain. Let the Americans have their lands immediately. Whoever is not satisfied with my decision, let him tell me so!

Then, turning to the agents:

I promise you protection. If these people give you further disturbance, send for me. And I swear, if they oblige me to come again to quiet them, I will do it to purpose, by taking their heads from their shoulders; as I did old king George's, on my last visit to the coast, to settle disputes.

"Whatever might be thought of the equity of this decision," Ashmun adds, "there was but one sentiment as to the necessity of acquiescing in it." The usual exchange of friendly presents followed, and the settlers went back to work.

Ashmun then names the mechanism himself, in a sentence that does the whole module's work and was written to do something else entirely. That guardian Providence which had made the infant settlement the object of its tenderest care, he writes, had in few instances been more conspicuous "than in thus employing the ill-gotten power of an ambitious stranger in the interior of Africa, to deliver the colonists, at a moment when hostilities would have defeated their object." Providence had removed the principal obstacles to a pacification "almost without an effort on the part of the settlers, and entirely without the knowledge, or the presence, of either of the Agents."

Strip the theology and the sentence is an inventory item. In the spring of 1822 the credible organised violence standing behind the settlement's title to Cape Mesurado belonged to a Muslim Malinke trading confederation a hundred miles inland, which had not been asked, was not paid so far as the record shows, and acted for reasons of its own. Read those reasons as a position rather than as a favour and they are not obscure: Condo's revenue was the passage of interior goods to the Atlantic, the coastal Deys were middlemen taking a cut of it, and a permanent buyer on the Cape who owed his existence to Bopolu was worth more to Bopolu than another Dey town was. Sao Boso was not being generous. He was placing a counterparty. But the effect on the settlement's ledger is the same either way: **the floor at the founding was not the settlers' and was not the Society's. It was rented, from a landlord who set no rent, and could therefore be withdrawn at any time without anyone defaulting.**

The council at King Peter's Town

By the autumn the Deys had reached a different conclusion, and Ashmun — this is the most valuable thing in his book and he prints it without appearing to notice what he is printing — records both sides of their deliberation.

Kings Peter and Bristol argued against war. Their case, in Ashmun's summary of it, was that the colonists' increasing numbers gave them a superiority that would ensure their success, and

> *that they were not a settlement of foreigners and enemies, but of their countrymen and friends, as was proved by the identity of their colour, and therefore had a right to reside in their country, and might be expected to turn all the civilization which they had learnt abroad, to the improvement of their common country.*

King George, the man called Governor, and all the other head men of the tribe argued the opposite:

> *The Americans were strangers who had forgot their attachment to the land of their fathers; for if not, why had they not renounced their connexion with white men altogether, and placed themselves under the protection of the kings of the country? King George had already been under the necessity of removing from his town, and leaving the Cape in their hands. This was but the first step of their encroachments. If left alone, they must, in a very few years, master the whole country. And as all other places were full, their own tribe must be without a home, and cease any longer to remain a nation. The armed schooners were gone;—the two first Agents had fled also:—the new people could from sickness very little assist the old in the defence of the place; and had brought with them a valuable cargo of stores, which would enrich the conquerors. The White Man was sick; no doubt would die; and the rest were not much superior to an equal number of themselves, and could be easily overcome, either by sudden surprise, or by a wasting and harrassing blockade.*

Two things are happening in that passage and both are worth slowing down for.

The first is that the entire question this study exists to answer was put, debated and voted on by African rulers within seven months of the landing, and both available answers were stated with complete clarity. Were these people kinsmen returning, whose colour proved a right of residence and whose foreign learning would improve the common country — or strangers who had declined the one thing a stranger on that coast was supposed to do, which was to place himself under the protection of the kings of the country and hold his ground of them? Peter, the man whose name is on the

contract, argued the first. George argued the second, and George's version is a precise description of the landlord–stranger relation being refused: the objection is not that the Americans came, nor even that they bought, but that they would not be received. George won the vote. Peter, Ashmun notes, "presuming still to dissent from the general voice of his chiefs, was principally thro' the influence of George, obliged to shut his mouth, during all the following deliberations of the assembly."

The second is that George's assessment was accurate in every particular, including the ones that had not happened yet. The armed schooners were gone. The first two agents had gone. The new arrivals were too sick to fight. And on the long horizon: if left alone the settlement would in a very few years master the whole country, all other places being full, so that his own people would cease to be a nation. The forecast was correct. What was wrong with it was not the analysis but the arithmetic of the moment, and the reason the arithmetic was wrong is that George had counted the settlers' guns and had no way of counting Ashmun's three months of work with them.

There is one more sentence in this stretch of the record, and it is a footnote. Ashmun's message of warning to the assembled chiefs told them that if they brought war upon the Americans without asking to settle their differences in a friendly manner, "they would dearly learn what it was to fight white men." To which Ashmun appends: "A phrase by which civilized people of all colours and nations are distinguished in the dialect of the coast." Ten months after the landing, the coastal category into which the settlers had already been placed was *white men*, and the agent felt obliged to explain to his American readers that the phrase did not mean what they would assume. The order's boundary marker was in place before the order had a constitution.

The eleventh of November

The attack came at daybreak on 11 November 1822, four days after intelligence of it reached the Cape. The enemy's numbers are Ashmun's estimate and should be held as one; what is not in doubt is what the artillery did to them once the western post was retaken and the long nine could be brought to bear along their line. Ashmun's description of it is the most explicit thing in the book and he wrote it for an American readership he expected to be moved:

> *Eight hundred men were here pressed shoulder to shoulder, in so compact a form that a child might easily walk upon their heads from one end of the mass to the other, presenting in their rear a breadth of rank equal to twenty or thirty men, and all exposed to a gun of great power, raised on a platform, at only thirty to*

sixty yards distance! Every shot literally spent its force in a solid mass of living human flesh!

The colony never established how many died. The colonial journal entry of 15 November records that a large canoe was employed upwards of two hours ferrying the dead and wounded across the Montserado, that the wounded were also carried off along the south beach on mats, that the dead left in the woods were removed by their friends at night, and that "two days ago, twenty-seven bodies were discovered by a party of friendly Condoes employed by the Agent for the purpose."

That last clause is easy to read past. Condo men were hired by the settlement to find the bodies of men whom other Condo men, hired by the coalition, had helped to kill. The confederation that had guaranteed the settlement's title in the spring was supplying auxiliaries to both sides by the autumn, which is what a regional power does and is not a betrayal of anything.

The settlement's own losses were counted exactly, because the settlement could count them. Ashmun prints the return made at nine o'clock that morning:

Joseph Benson, shot dead in the beginning of the action; Mary Tines, stabbed to death in her house; Thomas Spinn, mortally injured by 5 wounds; Billy, a native African, mortally wounded; Ann Hawkins, desperately injured by 13 wounds; Daniel Hawkins, severely do. through the thigh; James Benson, very severely do. through the shoulder; Minty Draper, slightly do. in the face and ear; 2 small children of Minty Draper, missing; 5 do. do. (oldest 13 years) of James Benson, do. 15 Whole number of sufferers. All the moveable effects of five families had fallen into the enemy's hands.

Read it as what it is. It is a casualty list, and it is also a household census: two adults dead, two mortally wounded, four wounded, seven children carried off, five families stripped. In an ordinary conquest these are two different documents produced by two different offices. Here the muster roll, the population register and the butcher's bill are one sheet of paper with fifteen names on it, of whom seven are children under fourteen. That is what it means to say a settler order's floor is identical with its population, and it is the reason the second attack, three weeks later, was fought by people with nothing whatever to fall back on: fifteen days' provisions exclusive of rice, ammunition Ashmun privately reckoned "insufficient for a single hour's defence of the place if hotly attacked," and seven of their children in the hands of an enemy.

What the sellers said they had sold

Between the two attacks the settlement tried to negotiate, and the answer it received is the single most important document this study will handle before the constitution.

On 22 November a message went through to the chiefs' council at King Peter's Town, asserting that the Americans had come with friendly intentions, asking why war had been brought without any complaint of injury, offering peace and promising a more destructive war. The reply came at daylight the next morning. The chiefs said:

> *having bought the low land of Bushrod Island, the Americans had seized upon the Cape, without right—that the country people visiting the settlement, had been cheated and roughly used by the store-keeper—that the Agents had not fulfilled their promise of instructing the people. But they would gladly make peace, if satisfaction were offered for these injuries.*

Three heads of complaint, and not one of them is a denial that a bargain was made.

The first is a dispute about the extent of the conveyance: what was sold was the low land of Bushrod Island; the Cape was taken. The second is a complaint about the conduct of trade under the arrangement. The third is a complaint that a promise was not kept — the promise, made by the agents at their first round of visits, to receive the sons and subjects of the neighbouring kings and instruct them in the language and arts of civilisation. Taken together they are the grievances of a party to a continuing relationship who believes the other party has exceeded the grant, cheated in the dealing, and defaulted on the consideration. They are not the grievances of people who think they were robbed of a country.

Eleven months after the signing, in the conqueror's own published account, the sellers state that they conveyed one thing and the buyers took another. Whatever the recovered deed turns out to say about acreage, that dispute was live from the first year, and the settlement answered it with cannon because at that moment cannon was the only thing it had.

The first of December, and the woman with the pipe

The second assault came at half past four in the morning on 1 December, after three days in which both sides watched each other across cleared ground. Ashmun had used the interval well: the wood cut back so the attackers had to cross open field, every approach covered by the crossfire of two or more posts, the stockade thickened to stop musket balls, the men ranged along it at five yards' interval with orders to run to the guns at the alarm. The western attack was broken in seventy minutes, the eastern in

ninety after the main body rallied and came on four times. Three men serving the eastern guns were badly wounded and one, Tines, mortally. Ashmun took three bullets through his clothes. "Not the most veteran troops," he wrote, "could have behaved with more coolness, or shewn greater firmness than the settlers, on this occasion" — and added the detail that gives the sentence its weight, that after twenty days of suspense the enemy's first volley "brought sensible relief to every breast," because it meant the waiting was over.

That is the day the Republic of Liberia would later commemorate, and the way it chose to commemorate it is a finding in its own right.

The national holiday observed every 1 December from 1916 until it was abolished in 1980 was Matilda Newport Day, named for a settler who had come out on the *Elizabeth* in 1820 and who, in the story, seeing the gunners at one of the batteries dead or wounded, lit the touchhole of a cannon with a coal from her pipe and broke the attack. The historicity is disputed and there is a plain reason for the doubt: Ashmun was present, kept the colonial journal from which he compiled his account four years later, printed a named casualty return for the first battle and named the three wounded gunners of the second, and does not mention her.

What matters here is not whether she lit the gun. It is what the story is shaped to do. A colony founded by people who had themselves been property required, above all other things, a founding narrative of self-reliance — and the actual events of 1822 will not supply one. The settlement's title had been secured by a Malinke king's threat to take his neighbours' heads off. Its artillery had been landed by a United States naval vessel on an anti-slaving patrol. Its ammunition ran out and its provisions ran out and it was fed, in the last week of November, out of the private stores of a Liverpool trader who happened to touch at the Cape. And the war was ended, as the next section shows, by a British officer passing on his way to somewhere else. A woman with a pipe removes every one of those people from the picture and puts a settler at the gun. It is a very economical piece of work, and the order kept it in the calendar for sixty-four years, and the men who overthrew that order in 1980 struck it out of the calendar in the same year, which tells you they understood exactly what it had been for.

What actually ended the war

On the night after the second assault the officer of the western post, seeing movement near his station, opened a brisk fire of musketry and several discharges of the heavy guns at nothing in particular. Six miles out, the English colonial schooner *Prince Regent*, laden with military stores, six days from Sierra Leone and bound for Cape Coast, was passing the Cape carrying Captain Laing of the Royal African Light

Infantry and a prize crew under a midshipman named Gordon from His Britannic Majesty's sloop *Driver*. A midnight cannonade being an unusual noise on that coast, the vessel lay by until morning, was boarded by a Kru boatman who told them what was happening ashore, and sent in an offer of any assistance in her power.

The officers landed the next morning and, "in their characters as neutrals," undertook at the agent's request to find out what the chiefs intended. They obtained an interview without much difficulty — the warriors had dispersed, the resources were exhausted, and the coalition was, in Ashmun's phrase, overwhelmed with shame — and induced the chiefs to sign an instrument binding themselves to an unlimited truce with the colony and to refer their differences to arbitration. Three months later the United States ship *Cyane* under Captain Robert T. Spence arrived off Montserado and put the settlement's defences in order; the *Cyane*'s surgeon, Dr Dix, was among the first of her people to die of the fever.

So the founding war was concluded by a British army officer on his way to the Gold Coast, acting as a neutral, aboard a prize vessel, because a settlement he had never heard of fired its guns at shadows on a night he happened to be sailing past.

The floor that never reached the country

One date closes the module and it is eighty-six years after the rest of it.

What the guns of 1822 held was a headland and, over the following decades, a string of coastal points acquired by further purchase and further fighting. What the Republic would claim was an interior running back to the watershed. The instrument for occupying that interior did not exist until February 1908, when President Arthur Barclay's government established the Liberian Frontier Force, five hundred men, whose stated mission was to patrol the borders of the hinterland — against British and French encroachment rather than against anybody living in it — and to prevent disorder. Its first commandant was a British major seconded from Sierra Leone, who arrived with some two hundred and fifty Sierra Leonean recruits, and who mutinied against the Liberian government on 11 February 1909 over unpaid wages.

The detail of that force and what it did belongs to later modules. Its founding date belongs here, because it is the measurement of everything above. For eighty-six years the order that this study is about held its ground with a militia of settlers and, when that failed, with whatever armed stranger was in the offing. When it finally raised a standing force it hired a foreign officer to command foreign troops, and the arrangement broke inside twelve months over pay.

Reading the floor of force against the framework

The contribution: a floor can be rented rather than built, from parties who supply it for reasons of their own and are never billed — and because the rental is never priced, it does not appear in the record as a cost, which makes an order of this kind look far stronger in its own archive than it was on the ground.

The corpus has so far treated the founding floor as something a conqueror pays for. It is levied, shipped, fed, garrisoned and buried, and the accounts show all of it; where the accounts show an apex spending real money on legitimacy it did not strictly need, the expenditure itself is the evidence of what the legitimacy was worth. Liberia inverts the test and thereby exposes a gap in it. The decisive violence of 1822 was supplied three times over — by a Condo king who wanted a trading counterparty on the coast, by a United States naval vessel whose commission was the suppression of the slave trade and not the founding of colonies, and by a British officer who was passing. Not one of the three was paid, and not one of them was under any obligation to appear again. The Society's ledgers, which record every barrel of provisions shipped from Baltimore, contain no entry for any of it.

Two consequences follow, and they run through the rest of this study.

The first is that **an unpriced floor is a floor nobody controls.** A garrison can be reinforced, disciplined, moved, and relied on; a neighbouring power's goodwill, a passing frigate and a stranger's private stores can only be hoped for. The settlement did not survive because it could credibly price defection — on Ashmun's own numbers it could not have priced anything — but because for a critical eighteen months the parties who could have destroyed it either did not wish to or were divided, and the parties who could save it kept happening to be there. This is not a floor in the sense the collection has used the word. It is a run of favourable weather, and the order that grew on top of it spent a century and a half unable to project force into the country it claimed on paper, which is the structural fact underneath the chiefs, the hut tax, the concessions and, in the end, the coup.

The second is sharper and is the finding this module hands forward. **Where a settler order's fighting strength is identical with its population, it cannot take casualties at all, and this changes what its violence is for.** A state that loses two hundred soldiers has lost soldiers; a settlement of thirty-five that loses two dead, two dying, four wounded and seven children in a morning has lost a twentieth of itself and a third of its next generation, and the roll recording the loss is the same roll that records who may vote. Such an order cannot fight a war of attrition, cannot garrison, cannot occupy, and cannot afford a single reverse. What it can do is buy allies, hire auxiliaries, play neighbours against one another, secure the intervention of outside powers, and —

crucially, from the moment it has any resources at all — recruit its fighting men from the population it rules rather than from the population it is. Every one of those became a permanent feature of the order. The Frontier Force of 1908 was recruited from the interior peoples and used to collect the interior's taxes; by 1980 the officers were settler-descended and the ranks were not. The line that runs from thirteen African youths drilled by Ashmun in August 1822, most of whom had never loaded a musket, to seventeen enlisted men in the Executive Mansion in April 1980 is not a metaphor. It is the same arrangement, made for the same reason, on the first day.

And a confirmation, recorded as such. The framework holds that a founding legend obscures the violence beneath it. This one does something more particular: it obscures the *helpers*. Matilda Newport's cannon does not hide the killing — the killing is the point of the story — but it removes the Malinke king, the American sloop, the British schooner and the Liverpool trader, which is precisely what a founding narrative must do for an order whose entire later claim on the world is that it was nobody's colony. Ashmun, writing in 1826 for American subscribers who needed to be told that Providence was at work, could afford to name every one of them. The Republic, celebrating the day for sixty-four years, could not.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from a public-domain primary text. All passages attributed to Jehudi Ashmun are from *History of the American Colony in Liberia, from December 1821 to 1823. Compiled from the Authentic Records of the Colony* (Washington City: Printed by Way & Gideon, 1826), which is in the public domain and available in full scan. Because the machine-generated transcription of that scan is unreliable, every quotation used here — the survey of military strength and the enrolment of the thirteen African youths (p. 19); the September sickness figures (p. 20); the plan of defence (p. 21); Boatswain's judgment, his promise of protection, and Ashmun's gloss on Providence employing an ambitious stranger (pp. 13–14); the two speeches at the war council and the phrase about fighting white men with its footnote (pp. 24–25); the description of the massed enemy, the colonial journal entry of 15 November, the settlers' numerical force and the casualty return (pp. 29–30); and the chiefs' answer of 23 November (p. 32) — has been checked against the page images of the 1826 printing and is given in Ashmun's own words and punctuation. Where Ashmun renders the speech of others he is reporting through a translator and from memory or from journal notes, and that chain is stated in the text rather than smoothed away: these are Ashmun's summaries of what the Dey and Condo leaders said, not transcripts, and the eloquence of the war-council speeches in particular is his.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Settler mortality across the first generation is from Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* (1995), with the 1843 census figure of 1,819 survivors as reported in the standard literature descending from Tom Shick's work on the emigrant rolls. The 1908 establishment, size and stated mission of the Liberian Frontier Force, the secondment of Major MacKay Cadell from Sierra Leone with Sierra Leonean recruits, and his mutiny over pay on 11 February 1909, are from the standard reference accounts and from Timothy Nevin's history of the Force, which I have not read in the original and cite at second hand; the Force's recruitment and conduct are for a later module and are not relied on here.

Contested figures and disputed events, given as such. The *Elizabeth* expedition's departure is dated 5 February and 6 February 1820 in different accounts and its emigrants counted at eighty-six and eighty-eight; the deaths at Sherbro by May 1820 are given as all three agents and about twenty-two colonists, an approximation. Ashmun's "eight hundred men" is his own estimate of the attacking force on 11 November and no independent count exists; the twenty-seven bodies recovered are what a search party found and are explicitly not a total, since Ashmun records that the dead were removed nightly. The Matilda Newport episode is reported as a national tradition rather than as an event: the holiday's observance from 1916 to its abolition in 1980 is taken from the standard reference accounts and has not been checked against the Liberian statute book, and the story's historicity is disputed in the literature. Ashmun's contemporaneous account of 1 December names the three wounded gunners and does not mention her, which is stated here as a fact about his text and not offered as proof of a negative.

MODULE 2

Without Manner of Conditions, Limitations, or Other Matter

Module 2: the settlement — a covenant of seisin signed with six X marks, a heritable freehold conveyed to people who had themselves been property, and a constitution that excluded white men by name and the country's overwhelming majority by no clause at all.

The clause that did the work

The founding instrument of Liberia was written on both sides of a single sheet of paper on 15 December 1821 and reads, in its operative part, as follows:

> *KNOW ALL MEN, that this contract, made on the fifteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one, between King Peter, King George, King Zoda and King Long Peter, their Princes, and Head-men, of the one part: and Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres of the other part; WITNESSETH, That whereas certain citizens of the United States of America are desirous to establish themselves on the Western Coast of Africa, and have invested Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres with full powers to treat with and purchase from the said Kings, Princes, and Head-men certain lands, viz: Dozoa Island, and also all that portion of land bounded north and west by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the south and east by a line drawn in a south-east direction from the north of Mesurado river, WE, the said Kings, Princes, and Head-men, being fully convinced of the Pacific and just views of the said citizens of America, and being desirous to reciprocate the friendship and affection expressed to us and our people, DO HEREBY, in consideration of so much paid in hand … FOR EVER CEDE AND RELINQUISH the above described Lands, with all thereto appertaining or belonging, or reputed to so belong, to Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres, TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said premises for the use of the said Citizens of America. And WE, the said Kings and Princes and Head-men, do further pledge ourselves that we are the lawful owners of the above described Land, without manner of conditions, limitations, or other matter.*

The whole architecture of this study is in the last sentence, and it is worth stating exactly what kind of sentence it is. It is not a grant. The grant is the clause before it, and a grant is only an act — a thing is handed over, and what was handed over is whatever

the grantor had. The last sentence is a *covenant of seisin*, the standard English conveyancing warranty by which a seller assures the buyer that he owns what he is selling and owns it absolutely. Its function is to shift risk: if the title turns out to be defective, the buyer sues on the covenant. And its content, here, is a proposition about African land tenure — that the holding these six men had over the ground at the mouth of the Mesurado was a holding "without manner of conditions, limitations, or other matter."

It was not. Everything known about how ground was held on that coast says it was conditions and limitations and nothing else: an allocation by elders to lineages, defended collectively, encumbered by obligation to ancestors and to the unborn, and inseparable from the persons who stood in the relation. A holding of that kind cannot be warranted free of conditions because it *consists* of conditions. But the buyers did not need to assert that the land was alienable in fee. They needed the sellers to assert it — in English, in a conveyancer's formula, over their signatures — and then the assertion is on the record, made by the conquered, available to be produced in any court for the next hundred and fifty years.

The signatures are X marks. All six of them. The two witnesses, John S. Mill and John Craig, signed their names. Nobody who gave the warranty could read it.

What else was in the same document

The document is a hybrid, and the parts of it that are not English conveyancing are the parts that record what the sellers thought they were doing.

The recital gives the sellers' motive: they were "being fully convinced of the Pacific and just views of the said citizens of America, and being desirous to reciprocate the friendship and affection expressed to us and our people." That is not the language of a vendor. It is the language of a host, and reciprocity of friendship is precisely the consideration in a landlord–stranger arrangement, in which a newcomer is admitted to ground because a relation has been established and not because a price has been agreed.

The consideration itself was in two parts. The goods paid in hand ran to six muskets, a box of beads, two hogsheads of tobacco, a cask of gunpowder, six bars of iron, ten iron pots, knives and forks and spoons by the dozen, six pieces of blue baft, four hats, three coats, three pairs of shoes, a box of pipes, a keg of nails, twenty looking-glasses, handkerchiefs, calico, three canes, four umbrellas, a box of soap and a barrel of rum. A further and larger schedule was "to be paid": three casks of tobacco, three barrels of rum, twelve pieces of cloth, twelve guns, three barrels of gunpowder, twenty hats, five casks of beef, five barrels of pork, ten barrels of biscuit, twelve decanters, twelve glass tumblers, fifty shoes and the rest. Eli Ayres reported the whole valuation to

the Society as not amounting to more than three hundred dollars. A conveyance with an executory consideration is not a closed transaction; it is a continuing relationship in which one party still owes the other, and the second tranche was the thing the Deys later refused to accept — the refusal that Sao Boso ruled "did not annul, or affect the bargain."

And then, after the habendum, two clauses that belong to no conveyance at all:

> *The contracting Parties pledge themselves to live in peace and friendship for ever; and do further agree to build for the use of the said Citizens of America, six large houses, on any place selected by them within the above described tract of ceded land.*

A seller who has for ever ceded and relinquished land does not thereafter build houses on it for the buyer. Housebuilding for an incoming stranger is what a host does, and it is one of the standard obligations of the landlord in the relation this coast had been running for centuries. So the same sheet of paper contains both transactions. The English formulae — cede and relinquish, to have and to hold, without manner of conditions — describe an absolute alienation. The recital, the executory consideration, the perpetual peace and the six houses describe a hosting. Both are in the instrument. Only one of them was in the language the instrument would later be read in.

One further oddity, small and worth recording because it goes to how the thing was drawn. The parties clause names four kings — Peter, George, Zoda and Long Peter. Six signed: those four plus King Governor and King Jimmy. Whether the extra two were added to strengthen the title, as one account suggests, or the drafting was simply loose, the document does not say.

How much was conveyed

The extent of the grant is the most consequential unresolved question in the founding record, and the range in the literature spans nearly three orders of magnitude.

The older accounts, and the earlier treatment of this subject, give a strip thirty-six miles along the coast by three miles deep — roughly a hundred and thirty square miles, or some eighty thousand acres. A separate account gives sixty miles of coast between the Mesurado and the Junk rivers, which is larger still. The scholarship surrounding the recovered original puts it at about a hundred and forty acres.

The deed's own words describe a bounded parcel: Dozoa Island, and land bounded on the north and west by the Atlantic and on the south and east by a line drawn south-east from the mouth of the Mesurado. That is a description by metes of a headland

between an ocean and a river, not of a province, and it does not obviously support a hundred and thirty square miles. This study will use the deed's description and treat the acreage as unresolved, giving the range wherever it matters, and it will note that the two large figures appear to descend through the secondary literature rather than from the text.

What is not in doubt is that within eleven months the sellers said the buyers had taken more than was sold. Their message of 23 November 1822 was that "having bought the low land of Bushrod Island, the Americans had seized upon the Cape, without right." Whatever the deed says, the parties disagreed about its extent inside a year, and the disagreement was settled by cannon and by a Condo king's arbitration rather than by construction of the document.

What the settlers got, stated at full weight

Now the other half of the settlement, and it should be given without irony, because it is the thing that made everything afterwards possible.

A settler family arriving in Liberia received a town lot and twenty-five acres of farmland. A single settler received a town lot and ten acres. The grant was in fee simple — permanent, heritable, and fully transferable — conditional on the grantee clearing a specified portion and building a house within a set period, with tools and river transport supplied. Emigrants who arrived as minors were apprenticed to learn a trade, and on reaching adulthood received twelve dollars from the government and five acres from the Society.

Consider what that is. In the United States these people, or their parents, had been real property themselves — entered in an inventory, mortgaged, devised by will, assessed at a court-certified value if killed. The great unkept promise of the American emancipation, forty acres, was ordered in the field in 1865 and revoked within the year, and the land was returned to the men who had held the people. In Liberia, from 1822, the schedule was smaller and it was actually conveyed, by deed, to the grantee's own name, heritable by his children.

That is not a token and it is not a fig leaf. It is the single most important fact in the benefit column of this entire study, and any account of the Americo-Liberian order that treats the settlers as having simply reproduced their oppressors has to reckon with it first. The order held for a hundred and thirty-three years without a standing army until 1908, and the explanation begins here: several thousand people had, in their own names and on paper, the exact thing the society they came from had defined them as being.

The marker, and where it is not

The Republic's constitution was adopted in convention at Monrovia on 26 July 1847. It restates the grievance that produced the emigration in a preamble of unusual directness — "We were everywhere shut out from all civil office. We were excluded from all participation in the government. We were taxed without our consent. We were compelled to contribute to the resources of a country, which gave us no protection. We were made a separate and distinct class, and against us every avenue to improvement was effectually closed" — and it records the acquisition of the country in one clause: "Under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, we established ourselves here, on land acquired by purchase from the Lords of the soil."

Its marker of membership is Article V, section 13:

> *The great object of forming these Colonies, being to provide a home for the dispersed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten this benighted continent, none but persons of color shall be admitted to citizenship in this Republic.*

This is the inversion, and it is real. It is the only founding constitution in this collection whose racial exclusion runs against white people, and it was not decorative: read with section 12, which provides that "No person shall be entitled to hold real estate in this Republic, unless he be a citizen of the same," it means that no white person could own land in Liberia. That prohibition survived, in successive forms, into the twenty-first century.

But now notice what the document does not say. The indigenous peoples of the country — the Dey, Gola, Vai, Bassa, Kpelle, Kru, Grebo, Mandingo and the rest, who were somewhere above ninety per cent of the population of the territory the Republic claimed — are persons of colour. Section 13 does not exclude them. No section excludes them. There is no clause in the Constitution of 1847 barring an indigenous Liberian from citizenship, from the franchise, from office or from land.

The exclusion was total for the better part of a century. It was accomplished without a clause.

Article 14, which reads as a protection

The instrument is section 14, and it must be read twice, because it reads the first time as the opposite of what it is:

> *The purchase of any land by any citizen or citizens from the aborigines of this country for his or their own use, or for the benefit of others, or estate or estates in free simple, shall be considered null and void to all intents and purpose.*

On its face this is a shield. It forbids settlers to buy land privately from indigenous people and voids any such purchase absolutely. It was framed as, and to a considerable extent operated as, a bar on exactly the private land-grabbing that stripped indigenous peoples in North America, southern Africa and Australia — a real protection, honestly intended by at least some of the men who voted it, and it prevented a great deal of individual dispossession.

Its structural effect is to make the Republic the only party in the world that can convert indigenous land into property. The device is not original; it is the pre-emption doctrine of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and of the American federal statutes that followed, in which the sovereign monopolises the extinguishment of native title and every subsequent title in the country therefore descends from a government grant. Under section 14, land held by the aborigines can pass to a citizen only after passing through the state; the state alone determines when it passes, on what terms, and to whom.

Section 15, immediately following, is the entire provision the Constitution makes for the majority of the people in the territory:

> *The improvement of the native tribes and their advancement in the arts of agriculture and husbandry, being a cherished object of this government, it shall be the duty of the President to appoint in each county some discreet person whose duty it shall be to make regular and periodical tours through the country for the purpose of calling the attention of the natives to these wholesome branches of industry, and of instructing their in the same, and the Legislature shall, as soon as it can conveniently be done, make provisions for these purposes by the appropriation of money.*

A travelling agricultural instructor per county, when the Legislature can conveniently afford it. That is the whole of it.

The chain, and the two hundred and seventy-two

The mechanism becomes visible when the property clauses are read together with the franchise clause. Article I, section 11:

> *All elections shall be by ballot and every male citizen, of twenty-one years of age, possessing real estate, shall have the right of suffrage.*

And the qualifications for office: a representative must own real estate worth not less than one hundred and fifty dollars in his county; the President must possess unencumbered real estate to the value of six hundred dollars.

Follow the chain. The vote requires real estate. Real estate requires citizenship. Citizenship requires colour — and colour, for the indigenous population, is not a barrier at all. The chain does not exclude them by race. It excludes them by tenure. They had no real estate, in the sense the word bears in that sentence, because their land was not real estate; it was the relation that section 14 had just declared unpurchasable by any private person and that no statute had yet converted into a thing.

The constitution was ratified by referendum on 27 September 1847. It was approved by seventy-nine per cent of the votes. Two hundred and seventy-two people voted.

The Society's residual

One clause of the settlement deserves separate notice because of where it sits. The full text of Article V, section 12 is:

> *No person shall be entitled to hold real estate in this Republic, unless he be a citizen of the same. Nevertheless this article shall not be construed to apply to Colonization, Missionary, Educational, or other benevolent institutions, so long as the property or estate is applied to its legitimate purposes.*

The independence constitution bars every non-citizen on earth from holding land in Liberia, and then, in the next sentence, exempts colonization societies. The document that dissolves the political connection with the American Colonization Society and returns to the people the powers they had delegated writes that same Society a standing property right in the country it had founded, effective the moment the Republic exists. Article V, section 16 completes the arrangement: the Society's existing regulations concerning emigrants remain in force "until regulated by compact between the Society and the Republic."

Sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilisation

The tenure settlement of 1847 was completed over the following century by the instruments that governed the interior, and the finished machine is worth setting out because its final form states the condition explicitly.

From the Hinterland Regulations, first issued in 1905 and revised thereafter, land in the interior was held under a distinct and inferior form of title. A tribe could obtain an

aborigines land deed: a collective title, vested in the paramount chief and elders as trustees for the community, which could not be sold, mortgaged or transferred. Alongside it stood the ordinary land deed, covering the allocations made to settlers from 1821, and the public land sale deed, by which a citizen bought public land in fee. Public land — which is to say, in effect, everything not already deeded — could be granted by the state, and in 1926 a million acres of it were leased for ninety-nine years to a rubber company, on terms that belong to a later module.

The bridge between the two tenures is Article 66 of the 1949 revision of the Hinterland Regulations, which sets out how the majority might become owners:

> *Should the tribe become sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilization, they may petition the government for a division of the [tribal] land into family holdings in which event the government will grant deeds in fee simple.*

The door is open. It is expressly open. The condition of passage is that the tribe become sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilisation, and sufficiency is assessed by the government whose members already hold their land in fee. The mechanism was not merely theoretical: a joint resolution of the Legislature in 1895–96 granted ten acres in fee simple to each male member of the Cape Palmas Tribe in Maryland County — the identical schedule a single settler had received in 1822. It could be done. It was done, once, by name, for one people, seventy-three years after the landing.

The last stage is the franchise, and it repeats the same logic in a different currency. In 1945 the Constitution was amended to extend the vote to citizens of the three inland provinces, on condition that they paid the hut tax. The property qualification, applied to a population that had no property in the constitutional sense, was converted into a tax qualification. A man could not vote because he owned land; he could vote because he paid for the privilege of living on land he had been told he did not own.

Whether the settlement seated its own conquerors

It did, and unusually cleanly, because the group was small enough to be listed.

The signatories at Monrovia in July 1847 were Samuel Benedict as president of the convention, Hilary Teage, Elijah Johnson, J. N. Lewis, Beverly R. Wilson and J. B. Gripon for Montserrado; John Day, Amos Herring, A. W. Gardiner and Ephraim Titler for Grand Bassa; E. E. Murray for Sinoe, with Jacob W. Prout as secretary. Elijah Johnson was one of the men who had held the lines at Cape Mesurado in November 1822 — Ashmun names him leading the musketeers who turned the enemy's flank. Hilary Teage was the sixteen-year-old who had sailed from Norfolk with his father

Colin, the saddler who had bought himself; he became the editor of the *Liberia Herald* and wrote the Declaration of Independence. These were the holders of the town lots, and the property qualifications they wrote into Articles I and II were qualifications they met.

But the framework's usual question — did the settlement seat the men who made the conquest, and did it thereby buy their loyalty — needs adjusting here, because these men were not a foreign aristocracy installing itself over an existing hierarchy. They were a few thousand people, most of them a decade or two out of bondage, several of them having bought themselves in cash, distributing among themselves in fee simple the one form of standing their previous order had defined them as being incapable of holding. The settlement did seat its conquerors. It also, and at the same time, and by exactly the same clauses, seated a class of former chattels as freeholders. Both are true of the same deeds and neither cancels the other, and holding both at once is the discipline this whole study will require.

Reading the settlement against the framework

The contribution: a settlement can accomplish a total exclusion without any exclusion clause, by defining property so that only one party's holdings qualify — and this form is more durable than a race bar, because it names nobody, is genuinely open in principle, and converts the excluded party's grievance from a demand for repeal into an application for certification.

The corpus's settlement cases have so far turned on instruments that say what they are doing. A statute declares an occupied country vacant, or a collective holding partible, or an office an estate, and the assertion is on the face of the document where it can be read, quoted and eventually attacked. The Constitution of 1847 does none of that to the people it actually governed. Its one explicit racial exclusion runs against white men, and it means it. The ninety-odd per cent it excluded appear in the text twice: once in section 14, protectively, as people from whom no citizen may privately buy land, and once in section 15, benevolently, as people to whom an agricultural instructor shall be sent. Neither clause bars them from anything. The bar is the word *real estate* in Article I, section 11, working against a tenure that the same document had just placed beyond private conversion.

Three consequences follow, and they are why this configuration outlasts the alternatives.

It is unquotable. There is no sentence in the founding charter that an excluded man can read aloud as the sentence that excludes him. What excludes him is the interaction of three provisions, none of which mentions him.

It is genuinely open, which is the part that matters most and is hardest to hold steadily. The door was not sealed. The Hinterland Regulations say in terms that a tribe sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilisation may petition for division into family holdings and receive deeds in fee simple. Individuals passed through it; the Cape Palmas grant of 1895 shows a whole named group passing through it. An order with a real door does not have to defend a lie, and the men administering it were not being cynical when they said the exclusion was temporary and remediable. They were describing the machine accurately.

And it converts the politics. Where the bar is a race clause, the excluded demand its repeal, which is a single, collective, all-or-nothing political act. Where the bar is a standard of advancement assessed by the grantor, the excluded must instead apply — individually, or tribe by tribe, on the grantor's timetable, with evidence the grantor evaluates. That is an administrative queue rather than a political demand, and a queue has no moment at which everyone in it is asking for the same thing at once. It also flatters the grantor, since every certification is proof of the order's good faith and every refusal is a finding about the applicant. **Surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took; a certification requirement is the tell of an exclusion that has learned not to leave a target.**

A refinement, offered to the Landscape's finding. That module proposed that where an indigenous law of hospitality exists, the conqueror's work is done not at the agreement but in the recording. The deed narrows it further: the operative provision is not the granting clause and not the habendum but the *covenant of seisin*. The buyers never assert that African land was alienable in fee. They procure the sellers to assert it — "we are the lawful owners of the above described Land, without manner of conditions, limitations, or other matter" — in the buyers' language, over marks the sellers could not read, and thereafter the assertion is in the record as the conquered's own statement. That is why this species of fiction survives challenge so well. It cannot be answered by producing the true state of the tenure, because the document already contains a denial of it signed by the people who held it.

And a confirmation that has to be recorded honestly. The framework holds that a settlement buys compliance by giving real things to real people, and that the size of the giving predicts the order's durability. Here the giving was large in the only currency that mattered to the recipients: heritable, transferable freehold, in their own names, to people whose previous legal condition was to be the object of such a deed rather than its holder. Twenty-five acres and a town lot is a small farm. It is also, precisely and not metaphorically, the negation of a bill of sale. Whatever else the order did over the next

century and a half, this is what it paid its own people, and it paid it on the first day and never stopped.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from primary texts. The Ducor Contract of 15 December 1821 is quoted from the text reproduced in Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia* (1947), at pages 195–96, as retyped in full by the historian Timothy Nevin and corroborated in the passages independently quoted from the same pages of Huberich by Niels Hahn; I have not seen the manuscript, now in the Elias B. Caldwell papers at the Chicago History Museum, and the chain is stated here rather than concealed. The Constitution of 1847 — the preamble, Article I sections 1 and 11, Article II section 2, Article III section 7, and Article V sections 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, together with the list of signatories — is quoted from the text published by the Liberian Institute for Law and Legal Research, checked against a second online transcription; both derive ultimately from Huberich's reproduction of the engrossed text. Article 66 of the 1949 revision of the Hinterland Regulations is quoted as it appears in a 2024 scholarly article on Liberian land formalisation, which cites the 1949 Government of Liberia text; I have not seen the regulations themselves and flag this quotation as reaching me at one remove. The chiefs' message of 23 November 1822 is from Ashmun's 1826 *History*, checked against the page image, as in the preceding module.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and reference material, credited. The settler allotment of a town lot with twenty-five acres to families and ten acres to single persons in fee simple, with clearance and building conditions, is from the Land Portal country profile and a county historical account of an emigrant community, which agree; I have not traced it to the Society's own regulations or to the Commonwealth statutes and it should be verified there before any weight beyond the present argument is placed on it. The structure of Liberian land titles — land deed, aborigines land deed, public land sale deed, and the trusteeship of tribal land in chiefs and elders — is from the standard tenure-security country profiles. The Cape Palmas Tribe joint resolution of 1895–96 granting ten acres in fee simple to each male member is cited from a *Journal of African Law* article on the legal history of public land in Liberia, at second hand. The 1945 and 1946 constitutional amendments extending the franchise to hut-taxpaying citizens of the interior provinces and to women are from the standard reference accounts of those referendums.

Contested and unresolved. The extent of the December 1821 grant remains open, at about 140 acres in the scholarship surrounding the recovered document, at thirty-six

miles by three in the older accounts, and at sixty miles of coast in another; this module reads the deed's own metes and does not adopt a figure. The valuation of the consideration at not more than three hundred dollars is Ayres's own report to the Society as given in Huberich. Whether the second, unpaid tranche of goods was ever delivered is disputed, the Liberian historian Joseph Saye Guannu holding that it was not; Ashmun's account records that the Deys refused it. The dating of the Public Lands Law is given in the sources both as a 1904 statute and as a 1956 law, which are probably an original and a revision, and I have not established the relationship; nothing in this module turns on it. Whether the number of indigenous inhabitants of the claimed territory in 1847 was ninety per cent of the whole or higher cannot be established, since no census of them existed; the settler population was counted and theirs was not.

MODULE 3

The Native African, Bowing Down With Us

Module 3: the Robe — a founding declaration addressed by name to the nations of Christendom, a grievance list aimed at a country that was not the one being separated from, and a majority who appear in the legitimating document exactly once, as a witness to somebody else's achievement.

Whom it was written for

Most founding documents leave their intended reader to be inferred. This one names him twice, at the top and at the bottom, and the two mentions are the frame within which everything between them was composed.

The Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Liberia opens by declaring the Commonwealth a free, sovereign and independent state, and then explains why it is going on to say anything further:

> *Whilst announcing to the nations of the world the new position which the people of this Republic have felt themselves called upon to assume, courtesy to their opinion seems to demand a brief accompanying statement of the causes which induced them, first to expatriate themselves from the land of their nativity and to form settlements on this barbarous coast, and now to organize their government by the assumption of a sovereign and independent character. Therefore, we respectfully ask their attention to the following facts.*

And it closes:

> *Therefore, in the name of humanity and virtue and religion — in the name of the Great God our common Creator and our common Judge, we appeal to the nations of Christendom, and earnestly and respectfully ask them that they will regard us with the sympathy and friendly consideration to which the peculiarities of our condition entitle us, and to extend to us that comity which marks the friendly intercourse of civilized and independent communities.*

The document exists, on its own account, because courtesy to the opinion of the nations of the world demands a statement, and its object is comity. Everything in between is the case put to that reader. The people living in the territory the Republic

was claiming are not the reader, are not addressed at any point, and are not asked for anything.

The declaration that thanks the sovereign it is leaving

Hilary Teage had the American model in front of him and departed from it in one structural respect that is worth setting out carefully.

The Declaration of 1776 indicts the sovereign it separates from. The grievances and the separation run to the same party; the whole force of the document is that George III has forfeited a claim, and therefore the claim ends. Teage's Declaration also carries a grievance list, and it is a real one — "We were everywhere shut out from all civil office. We were excluded from all participation in the government. We were taxed without our consent. We were compelled to contribute to the resources of a country which gave us no protection. We were made a separate and distinct class, and against us every avenue to improvement was effectually closed" — but every clause of it is directed at the United States of America, which was not the party Liberia was separating from.

The party Liberia was separating from was the American Colonization Society, and the Society is praised. Its withdrawal is described as an act of good faith performed on schedule under a compact honourably kept: the Society "has nobly and in perfect faith redeemed its pledges to the people," it acted "with that good faith which has uniformly marked all its dealings with us," and its withdrawal from active administration is glossed as having been undertaken "for the apparent purpose of testing the ability of the people to conduct the affairs of government."

This is not confusion. It is the only arrangement that serves the audience. The grievance list satisfies the settlers and the free black readership in America; it is also the credential that explains why such a state should exist at all. The praise satisfies the Society's subscribers, who were the men financing the ships and lobbying for the appropriations, and whose good opinion was the difference between continued emigration and none. And the appeal for comity satisfies the third reader, the European powers, whose recognition was the only thing standing between a settlement of a few thousand people and annexation by whichever of them wanted the coast.

The proposition is competence, not justice

Read the Declaration and the surrounding oratory for what is actually being asserted and it is not what a founding document usually asserts.

Seven months before independence, on 1 December 1846 — the anniversary of the second assault on Cape Mesurado — Hilary Teage gave the annual oration at

Monrovia. He devoted its central passage to reciting, in full and in the opposing party's own terms, the charge the whole enterprise existed to answer:

> *Will they, who have been declared incapable of enjoying liberty without running into the wildest excesses of anarchy — will they, now the gift is enjoyed in its largest extent, restrain themselves within the bounds of a rational and virtuous freedom? … Is it to be expected that a people just set free from the chains of the most abject oppression and slavery, can be otherwise than turbulent, insubordinate, and impatient of the least restraint?*

And then answered it, naming the audience in the same breath:

> *Fellow-Citizens! the voice of twenty-four years this day gives the answer; and we are assembled to hear it, and let those who abuse us hear it; let them hear it and be for ever silent, when they hear that Liberty regulated by Law, and Religion free from Superstition, form the foundation on which rests the cement which unites, and the ornament which beautifies, our political and social edifice.*

Roberts said the same thing in his inaugural address to the first Legislature on 3 January 1848, and identified precisely what was on trial:

> *The time has been, I admit, when men — without being chargeable with timidity, or with a disposition to undervalue the capacities of the African race, might have doubted the feasibility of establishing an independent Christian state on this coast, composed of, and conducted wholly by Coloured men, — but, fellow-citizens, that time has passed.*

The claim being made is not that the arrangement in Liberia is just. It is that it works, and that its working settles a question. The Republic is being offered as a demonstration, and what it demonstrates is a proposition about the capacity of a race — a proposition contested by people four thousand miles away, in an argument about slavery in which nobody living on the Grain Coast had a vote.

The pamphlet

The clearest evidence for what the robe was and where it was consumed is not an argument. It is an object.

In 1848 a Leeds Quaker named Wilson Armistead had printed in London a pamphlet titled *Calumny Refuted, by Facts from Liberia; with Extracts from the Inaugural Address of the Coloured President Roberts; an Eloquent Speech of Hilary*

Teage, a Coloured Senator; and Extracts from a Discourse by H. H. Garnett, a Fugitive Slave. It was presented to the Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar. It carries a notice to the reader:

> *The Reader will please to observe, that the following pages are printed solely with a view of refuting the calumnious charge of incapability and inferiority made against the Negro race, and not for the purpose of vindicating the American Colonization Scheme, concerning which great diversity of opinion exists.*

And it introduces the speeches as texts "which afford striking evidence of the capacity and attainments of Negroes, whose education and life from early boyhood are thoroughly African."

Consider the circuit. A president's inaugural address, delivered in Monrovia to a legislature of perhaps a dozen men, is shipped to England, printed at Leeds, published in London, and carried to a fundraising bazaar in Boston — as evidence, in a British and American controversy, about whether black people can govern themselves; and expressly disclaiming any view on the colony's own politics, which the publisher regards as a separate and disputed matter. The speech has been detached from the place that produced it and is circulating as data. Nobody in the circuit is asking what the people of the Grain Coast think of the Republic, because that is not the question the exhibit was entered to answer.

Where the governed appear

The Declaration mentions the indigenous population of the country three times and the three mentions are worth listing, because between them they exhaust the place the majority occupies in the founding statement of the order that governed them.

They appear as scenery: the settlers came "to form settlements on this barbarous coast."

They appear as a completed counterparty: "our number has been increased by migration from America, and by accessions from native tribes; and from time to time, as circumstances required it, we have extended our borders by acquisition of land by honourable purchase from the natives of the country."

And they appear, once, as a witness:

> *The native African, bowing down with us before the altar of the Living God, declares that from us, feeble as we are, the light of Christianity has gone forth; while upon that curse of curses, the slave trade, a deadly blight has fallen as far as our influence extends.*

He is not addressed. He is produced. The verb is *declares*, and what he declares is a fact about the settlers. He is testimony offered to the nations of Christendom in support of the applicant's petition, and that is the whole of his role in the document.

This is the sentence the module is named for, and it should not be read as callousness or as an oversight, because it is neither. It is the only role the argument has available for him. If the claim being made is that a colony of black Americans has built a working Christian state on a barbarous coast, then the people of the coast are the material the work was done on, and material cannot also be an addressee. The structure of the proposition excludes them, and no ill will was required.

The floor relocated rather than inflated

Both the Declaration and the inaugural handle the founding violence, and the technique they use is not the one the collection has come to expect.

Roberts, in January 1848, on the settlers of 1822:

> *At a time when they were almost without arms, ammunition, discipline, or government — a mere handful of insulated Christian pilgrims, in pursuit of civil and religious liberty, surrounded by savage and warlike tribes bent upon their ruin and total annihilation — with "a staff and a sling" only, as it were, they determined, in the name of the "Lord of Hosts," to stand their ground and defend themselves to the last extremity against their powerful adversary. And need I remind you, fellow-citizens, how signally Almighty God delivered them.*

Teage, in December 1846, on the same events:

> *Most emphatically does the issue of that contest declare, "The battle is not to the strong." The Lord was a shield around them, so that when their foes rose up against them, they stumbled and fell. To the interposition of an ever-gracious Providence, manifested in no ordinary way, we owe the privileges and pleasure of this day.*

Set these against the inventory Ashmun published in 1826 — twenty-seven men able to bear arms when not sick, forty muskets requiring repair, one gun with a serviceable carriage, no fixed ammunition — and the striking thing is that the legend does not contradict it. *Almost without arms, ammunition, discipline, or government* is accurate. Roberts is not inflating the settlers' strength; he is conceding it exactly, and then substituting the agency of the deliverance. Where Ashmun's own account had placed a Malinke king with a force sufficient to carry his decisions into immediate

effect, a United States sloop-of-war, a Liverpool trader's private stores and a British officer passing on his way to Cape Coast, the robe places Providence.

This is a better technique than exaggeration and it should be named as such. A boast about numbers can be checked against the record and destroyed by it. A providential reading cannot be checked at all, and — this is the elegant part — it grows stronger the weaker the true inventory was. The archive's own evidence of helplessness becomes the legend's raw material. Twenty-seven sick men with one loadable gun is not an embarrassment to "the battle is not to the strong." It is the premise.

The invading native

One sentence from the same oration completes the picture, and it needs no gloss. Teage, listing what the present generation is no longer required to do:

> *Let us not suppose, that because we are not called upon to drive the invading native from our door — that because we can lie down at night without fear — because the savage war-whoop does not now ring upon the midnight air, — therefore we have nothing to do. No mistake can be more fatal. Ours is a moral fight.*

The people whose country it was are the invaders. The door is ours. This was said in Monrovia in December 1846 by the man who, seven months later, wrote that the borders had been extended "by acquisition of land by honourable purchase from the natives of the country" — and it is the same man, in the same year, and there is no contradiction in his mind, because the purchase made the ground ours and anyone coming onto it afterwards is an invader. The legal fiction of Module 2 has become, within twenty-four years, the plain furniture of a public speech.

The motto

Among the last orders of business at the convention of 1847 was the adoption of a national seal, described thus:

> *A dove on the wing with an open scroll in its claws. A view of the ocean with a ship under sail. The sun just emerging from the waters. A palm tree, and at its base a plough and spade. Beneath the emblems, the words REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, and above the emblems, the national motto, THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US HERE.*

Every element records an arrival. The ship is the emigrant vessel. The plough and spade are the tools the emigrants brought. The sun is rising because the nation is beginning. And the motto is in the first person plural.

That pronoun has been stamped on every official document of the Liberian state since 1847, and the overwhelming majority of the people it has been stamped on cannot say the sentence. It is not a careless pronoun; the same year's oratory distinguishes with precision between the citizens and, in Roberts's phrase, "the aboriginal inhabitants who have incorporated themselves with us." The motto is exact. It describes a voyage, it names who made it, and it therefore names, by omission, everybody else in the country.

The point has been made in Liberia repeatedly and by Liberians. President Tolbert's Commission on National Unity, fifty-one members under McKinley Deshield, was authorised in 1974 to reconsider the national symbols and reported in 1978. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended in 2009 that the motto be changed. A senator from Nimba put the objection in 2011 in five words: they didn't bring us, they met us here. The motto has not been changed.

The jury took fifteen years to answer

The robe was addressed to the nations of Christendom, and the nations of Christendom read it in a revealing order.

Great Britain recognised Liberia in 1848, within a year, Roberts having gone to Europe and been received by Queen Victoria. France followed. Portugal, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Haiti came in 1849. The state whose president the capital was named for, whose citizens had founded the settlement, whose society had shipped the emigrants, and whose treatment of free black people supplied the entire grievance list of the Declaration, did not recognise the Republic of Liberia until 1862.

The reason was not doubt about Liberia. Recognition would have required receiving a black diplomat in Washington, and the southern members would not have it. The obstacle was removed by secession. In his annual message of 3 December 1861, with eleven states absent from Congress, Lincoln wrote:

> *If any good reason exists why we should persevere longer in withholding our recognition of the independence and sovereignty of Hayti and Liberia, I am unable to discern it. Unwilling, however, to inaugurate a novel policy in regard to them without the approbation of Congress, I submit for your consideration the expediency of an appropriation for maintaining a chargé d'affaires near each of those new States.*

Set the two documents side by side and the arithmetic completes itself without comment. In 1847 a group of black Americans published a list of the indignities that had driven them out of the United States and asked the civilized world for the comity due between independent communities. The United States declined to extend it for fifteen years, for precisely the reason the list described, and granted it only when the men who objected had walked out of the building.

Reading the robe against the framework

The contribution: where an order needs recognition rather than permission, its robe argues competence rather than justice — and a competence robe structurally cannot address the governed, because the governed are the material on which the competence is demonstrated.

The colonial-bend prediction was a robe cut for whoever can revoke the licence. It survives here, but the mechanism it named does not, and the replacement is more interesting than the original.

Nobody could revoke Liberia. There was no charter to cancel, no mandate to withdraw, no metropole to lose patience. What there was instead was a jury with a single power, exercised by inaction: to decline to acknowledge that the thing existed. And non-recognition was not a formality. An unrecognised polity on the West African coast in the 1840s was a stretch of unallotted ground; recognition was the whole of Liberia's defence against Britain and France, and it remained so for the next eighty years. So the robe is cut, exactly as predicted, for an audience outside the country — but the lever is not revocation. It is admission.

That difference determines the robe's content. An order seeking permission argues that it is entitled. An order seeking admission argues that it is qualified. And the two make incompatible demands on the text.

A justice robe — any robe that says *this arrangement is right and here is why you should accept it* — must address the ruled, because their acceptance is the thing being claimed. Even the most cynical version has to name them, describe their condition, and say something about what they are owed. That is why every such robe in the collection creates a hostage to fortune: it states a principle in public that can afterwards be quoted back by the people it was used against.

A competence robe makes no such claim and takes no such risk. Its addressee is a third party holding something the applicant wants. The ruled are not the audience because their acceptance is not what is being asserted; their existence in a peaceable, Christian, trading, orderly condition is the *evidence*. Hence the native African bowing

down with us: not a concession, not an afterthought, but the only position the argument's grammar leaves for him.

Three consequences follow, and they run to the end of this study.

The robe generates no obligation. There is nothing in the Declaration of 1847 that an excluded Liberian could quote against the Republic on his own behalf. The document's stirring grievance list — taxed without consent, excluded from all participation in the government, made a separate and distinct class, every avenue to improvement effectually closed — is, word for word, an exact description of what the Republic then did to the interior for the better part of a century. It was available in print from 1847. It was not turned against the order, and no indigenous movement organised around it, and that silence is itself the measurement: a document is quoted back by the people it addressed, and this one addressed the nations of Christendom.

The robe is audited rather than believed. A justice robe fails when the ruled stop believing it. A competence robe fails when the audience checks the exhibit. It is therefore cheap in the direction of the governed — nothing is promised, so nothing can be defaulted on — and expensive in the direction of the jury, because the performance must be maintained indefinitely and is open to inspection at any time by parties with their own reasons for inspecting. That predicts where this order's legitimating crisis will come from, and it is not from below. It is from a commission with a mandate, which is what arrived in 1930.

And the founding legend refines the framework's account of founding legends. The corpus has treated such legends as exaggerations — the conquest made cleaner, the force larger, the resistance smaller. Roberts and Teage do the opposite. They concede the true inventory, which was catastrophic, and relocate the credit. Providence stands where Sao Boso stood. This is the stronger method precisely because it is not a lie about anything checkable: the weaker the settlement really was, the better it works, and the archive that would demolish a boast supplies the premise for a deliverance. **A founding legend does not have to falsify the floor. It only has to reassign the agency, and the more borrowed the floor was, the more effective the reassignment.**

A confirmation, recorded honestly. The grievance list in the Declaration is true. Every clause of it is an accurate account of the position of free black people in the United States in 1847, written by men who had lived under it and several of whom had bought themselves out of it. Its power over the audience came from its accuracy. What the document does is not falsify; it arranges true statements so that one question does not arise. That is worth holding, because it is the general case rather than the exception — the most durable robes in this collection are not fabrications, and treating them as fabrications is the fastest way to misunderstand why they lasted.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. The Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Liberia, ratified 26 July 1847, is quoted from the Wikisource transcription, which reproduces a nineteenth-century printing and which I have checked against the text of the Declaration as prefixed to the 1855 printing of the Constitution; the two agree in substance, and where the Wikisource transcription carries obvious scanning corruptions I have not reproduced the affected passages. The preamble to the Constitution of 1847, which restates the same grievance list in near-identical words, is as quoted in the preceding module. The description of the national seal adopted at the convention is quoted as it appears as the epigraph to a scholarly article on colonial Liberia, which cites the convention record; I have not seen the convention record itself and flag the chain. The extracts from President Joseph Jenkins Roberts's inaugural address of 3 January 1848 and from Hilary Teage's anniversary oration of 1 December 1846, together with the publisher's notice to the reader, are quoted from Wilson Armistead, *Calumny Refuted, by Facts from Liberia* (London: Charles Gilpin; printed at Leeds by Anthony Pickard, 1848), which is in the public domain in full text. Because Armistead prints extracts and not the whole, the passages quoted here are as he selected them; a complete text of the inaugural exists and any argument turning on what Roberts said elsewhere in it should be checked against that text rather than against this pamphlet. Lincoln's annual message of 3 December 1861 is quoted from the standard published text.

Paraphrased from reference material, credited and not quoted. The sequence of diplomatic recognitions — Great Britain in 1848, France, and Portugal, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Haiti in 1849, with the United States following in 1862 — is from the standard biographical accounts of Roberts. The reason for the American delay, and its removal by the absence of the seceded states from Congress, is the settled explanation in the literature on the recognition of Haiti and Liberia and is not controversial. The Deshield Commission on National Unity, appointed by President Tolbert under legislative authority of 22 July 1974, its fifty-one members and its report of 24 January 1978, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2009 recommendation on the motto, are from reference accounts of the Liberian national symbols; I have not seen either report. The remark by the senator from Nimba County in 2011 is quoted at second hand from a Liberian press account and is given here as reported speech.

Contested or unverified. The precise date of adoption of the arms and seal is given as 16 July 1847 in one reference source and simply as "at the convention" in others; the convention sat in June and July and the Constitution is dated 26 July, and the

discrepancy is not resolved here. Roberts's population estimate in the inaugural — upwards of eighty thousand for "Liberia proper," expressly including aboriginal inhabitants said to have incorporated themselves — is his own computation, offered as such, and no census existed against which to test it.

MODULE 4

The Recaptives of the Pons Were Children

Module 4: Formation — what reached the child before he could weigh it. An order that formed one alien population so completely that their name became the name of its ruling caste, refused the same to the people whose country it was, and never once contested the ground on which the other formation ran.

The question this module is asking

Formation is not schooling and it is not persuasion. Persuasion is what one attempts on an adult, who can already refuse; and adults, as the record everywhere shows, are difficult to shift. Formation is what arrives earlier than that — before the faculty that would screen it has finished growing — and what it installs is not a set of opinions but the furniture a person will later do his reasoning in: whose word he credits without needing to check it, who counts as his own people and who does not, what cannot be questioned without the questioning itself being an offence, and what story he understands his life to be inside. It is installed by whoever gets there first, and then defended for the rest of a life not as a proposition that might be revised but as the floor the person is standing on.

So the question here is not what the Republic of Liberia taught, or failed to teach. It is who reached the children of that country, at what age, and what they put in.

What was already running

The answer for most of the territory is Poro for the boys and Sande for the girls, and the thing to notice about them is not that they were old, though they were, but that they did every one of the jobs a formation does, and did one of them better than any state has managed.

They took the child at the threshold of adulthood and removed him. In the older practice the period in the bush ran to a year and by some accounts considerably longer; in the twentieth century it shortened to months and then to weeks. The initiation was a death and a rebirth: the boy was swallowed by the masked spirit, circumcised, scarred with marks understood as the spirit's teeth, and returned under a new name as an adult. Girls entered Sande by excision and a comparable seclusion, in which they made

rice farms for the society's leadership and learned what a wife and a mother is. What passed in the bush was not to be spoken of, then or afterwards; a Liberian will not, as a rule, discuss his own scars if a stranger raises them.

Inside, the child acquired the authorities he would credit for the rest of his life. The *zoe* — the priest — was one; the masked spirit was another and stood behind him; and above the ordinary member ran a hierarchy of graded lodges, each holding secrets from the ranks below, so that seniority itself was constituted by knowing what the junior did not. Senior Poro officials could intervene in the affairs of chieftaincy, which is why the anthropological literature treats Poro as a political institution and not merely a rite.

And then the part that matters most, and that no state formation in this collection has matched. In the communities that ran these societies, the uninitiated was not a junior member of the village. He was not a member at all. He was unclean, he was a child regardless of his age, he could not marry, and he was in the plainest sense not a citizen of his own town. Membership was personhood. Parents were therefore not persuaded to send their children; they were eager to, and competed for places in the season.

The dating was established in the Landscape and holds: the women's society was described in print in Amsterdam in 1668, from a first-hand account that appears to date from about 1628, at Cape Mount. The system was not universal — it was absent in the south-east, among the Kru and Grebo, who had comparable institutions of their own — but across most of the territory the Republic would claim, it had been taking every child in the country for at least two centuries before the first American ship anchored.

Set that beside the state that arrived in 1822 and the asymmetry is total. The Republic could offer a man a deed, a vote and a court. Poro had already told him, at twelve, who he was.

What the settler order built for its own children

The settlers, meanwhile, formed their own children thoroughly, and it is worth setting out because it is the control against which the withholding shows up.

An Americo-Liberian child in Monrovia or Grand Bassa or Sinoe grew up inside a covenanted congregation — Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian — that his grandparents had very often constituted themselves, in some cases before they sailed. He learned which men to credit and they were a short and overlapping list: the pastor, the elder, the lodge brother, the senator, the president, frequently the same handful of men wearing different marks in the same week. He learned who his people were from a calendar: the twenty-sixth of July for the Declaration, and the first of December for the

day a woman is said to have lit a cannon with a coal from her pipe, kept as a national holiday from 1916 until 1980. He learned the story, and the story was Exodus — Roberts's inaugural has the Divine Disposer separating them from the house of bondage and leading them towards the land of promise, and Teage has the Lord as a shield when their foes rose up against them. And he learned a vocabulary before he could examine it, in which *Congo* named his own kind and *country* named the other, and a country person was a category of human being distinguishable at a glance.

Institutions followed: Liberia College, authorised in 1851 and opened in Monrovia in 1862 with twenty students reading liberal arts and theology; the Masonic lodge; the mission secondary schools. This is a complete and functioning formation, and it should be said plainly that it worked. It is a large part of why an order resting on a floor as weak as Module 1 described held together for a hundred and thirty-three years: among its own people it ran on conviction and cost almost nothing to maintain.

What the state provided for everybody else

Against that, the record of provision for the majority is short enough to state in a paragraph.

A centralised educational system under a cabinet-level official was established in 1912 — sixty-five years after independence — and it encompassed only the five coastal counties, where it chiefly served Americo-Liberians. Before the Second World War, private and mission schools accounted for more than three-quarters of all educational facilities in the country, and mission schools, run and funded largely from America, provided whatever schooling the interior received; through the 1940s these amounted to fewer than a dozen substantial institutions. The Booker Washington Institute, a vocational school opened at Kakata in 1929, was established by a combination of American philanthropic and religious money rather than by the Liberian state.

The standard country study of Liberia, summarising the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, gives two reasons for the neglect and both are worth taking at face value. The governments were not financially able to consider educating the whole country, and their control over the interior was precarious or non-existent. And then it adds a third, which is the one that matters here: schools "would have had to contend with Poro and Sande training classes and other 'bush schools,'" which was no easy task.

That is the competition named by the order's own historians. The state did not merely under-provide. It never entered the ground on which the contest would have had to be fought, which is the ground of childhood, and it knew what was already standing there.

The exception, and what it proves

The Republic could form a population completely. It did so, in the same decades, in the same towns, through the same churches, to a group of people who had further to travel than any interior Liberian.

On 16 December 1845 the United States ship *Yorktown*, Commander Bell, landed at Monrovia seven hundred and fifty-six Africans taken from the slaver *Pons*. The American Colonization Society petitioned Congress for reimbursement of their support, and its petition describes what came ashore:

> *the United States ship Yorktown, Commander Bell, landed at Monrovia, Liberia, from the slaver "Pons," seven hundred and fifty-six recaptured Africans, in charge of the United States agent for recaptured Africans, in a naked, starving, and almost dying condition, and all excepting twenty-one under twenty years of age.*

And, distinguishing them from the emigrants the Society usually delivered:

> *These emigrants are civilized, grown up, clothed, have many of the necessaries of life, and to some extent are able to manage their own affairs and aid much in their support. But the recaptives of the Pons were children — naked, savage, and totally destitute of everything.*

Seven hundred and thirty-five of them under twenty, in a single day, into a settler community numbering a few thousand.

The *Pons* was one ship. Across the whole period, something on the order of five to six thousand recaptured Africans were landed in Liberia by the American squadron — a number comparable to a third or more of the entire American emigration. They arrived speaking a dozen languages, none of them English; carrying their own religions; from regions further from the Grain Coast than any part of the interior. They were baptised, renamed, apprenticed and taken into settler households and settler congregations. And they were absorbed so completely that their designation — *Congo*, from the region many had come from — became, and remains, the ordinary Liberian word for the settler caste itself. In April 1980 and for years afterwards, to call a man a Congo was to say he was Americo-Liberian. The word for the cargo of the slave ships became the word for the ruling class.

The Society's own agents recorded the result in the terms they cared about: hundreds had been Christianised, and many were so assimilated in their civilised habits that a stranger on the street would not readily distinguish them from Americo-Liberians.

So the capability existed, the will existed, and the machinery — the household, the congregation, the apprenticeship, the new name — was in working order. It was pointed at one population and not at the other.

Why the recaptives and not the Kpelle

Line up the candidate explanations and watch all but one fail.

It was not language. The recaptives arrived with no English; so did the Kpelle, and the Kpelle were at least in reach of Liberian towns.

It was not religion. Both arrived with their own; only one was pursued.

It was not distance. Bopolu is ninety miles from Monrovia. The Congo Basin is two thousand.

It was not any judgement about capacity. Nobody in the record suggests the children of the *Pons* were more promising material than the children of Careysburg's neighbours.

What the recaptive did not have was three things at once. He had no formation system running on the ground where he landed — Poro would not claim him, because he was not of a lineage that Poro served. He had no elders in the country whose authority would have to be displaced before his own could be installed. And he had no ancestral claim to a foot of Liberian soil.

That last is the operative one. A recaptive child could be admitted at the cost of his upkeep, which the Society was trying to bill to Congress at fifty dollars a head. An indigenous child could not be admitted at any price, because admission is not an individual transaction. Form one Kpelle boy into a Christian, English-speaking, deed-holding citizen and you have made one citizen. Form the Kpelle and you have raised, inside the Republic's own franchise clause and out of its own constitutional grievance list, the question of who owns the interior — and that question is the one thing the settlement of 1847 had been engineered to prevent from arising.

The ward: formation on terms

There was one channel that did reach indigenous children, and its terms are the whole finding in miniature.

It began in the first month. Ashmun, arriving in August 1822, records that he visited the principal kings and set about "receiving the sons and subjects of as many as possible to instruct in the language and arts of civilization." Three weeks later, with the war coming on, he records that the native youths "whose residence on the Cape had been regarded as the best security for the good conduct of the tribe, were daily

deserting." From the opening weeks the arrangement was two things at once: an education and a surety. The children were being taught, and they were also collateral.

It became the ward system, and it ran for a century and a half. An indigenous child was placed in a settler household. He worked, generally as a domestic servant. He was baptised. He was frequently schooled, sometimes alongside the household's own children. And he was given the family's surname, which is why Liberian surnames of American origin are borne today by very large numbers of people with no American ancestor.

It worked. The Liberian observation that many wards grew up behaving more Congo than the Congoes is a description of formation that took completely — the five levers all engaged, on a child, at the right age, by people who had him full-time. Some wards rose high.

But the terms carried their own content, and the content was the child's position. He was not a citizen's son lodging in another man's house. He was a ward, in a household, bearing that household's name because he had been given it. What the arrangement installed alongside the literacy and the catechism was an account of where he stood, and the name he answered to for the rest of his life was the record of the relation.

And the arrangement shaded, at its edge, into something the League of Nations commission of 1930 named. The Christy Commission found that pawning — the pledging of persons, including children, against debt or against tax — was widespread and that it amounted to a form of slavery; the parliamentary summaries of its report speak of children of five and six pawned in perpetuity to pay taxes. Ward and pawn were not the same institution, and the better households produced men who inherited and prospered. But the line between them lay in the character of the household rather than in the law, and the commission found both.

What held the field, and what the state did form

The consequence of ninety-seven years of withholding was not that the interior remained unformed. There is no such condition; a person who had been formed by nobody would not be free but feral. The consequence was that the interior was formed completely, by a system that installed a set of credited authorities the Republic did not appoint, a personhood the Republic did not confer, and a citizenship granted at twelve in the bush rather than at twenty-one on a deed.

Set the two offers side by side as they stood to an interior boy at the turn of the twentieth century. The Republic offered citizenship — under the Barclay administration's reorganisation of the hinterland, and on a condition: that he forgo the

authority of his own rulers and accept a paramount chief appointed under a provincial hierarchy, and that his people's land be held of the state. Poro offered citizenship at twelve, at no such price, from authorities his father already credited, in a ceremony his mother had also passed through, and had already collected before the Republic ever spoke to him.

There is a second consequence and it is the one that runs to the end of this study. Where the Liberian state did reach interior men at scale, and formed them, and succeeded, it was not in a school. It was in the Frontier Force, raised in 1908, recruited from the interior peoples, and used to collect the interior's taxes and suppress the interior's resistance. That institution took young men at the age at which the alternative would have been the bush, and gave them a rank, a uniform, a unit, a wage and a body of officers. A state that will not make citizens will still make soldiers, because rank is not standing and a uniform confers no claim on the country.

The late attempt

In January 1944 William Tubman was inaugurated on a programme of national unification, and the machinery began, ninety-seven years after the Declaration, to be pointed at the population it governed. The franchise was extended to citizens of the interior provinces in 1945, on condition that they paid the hut tax, and to women in 1946. Schools were built; the interior was given representation; the county system was eventually extended inland.

Whether ninety-seven years is a recoverable delay is a question this study will have to answer at the end, and it will not answer it here.

Reading formation against the framework

The contribution: an order withholds formation not from those who are culturally distant but from those whose admission would carry a claim — and the way to test this is to look not at the excluded population but at the included one.

The corpus already holds that a colonising order withholds formation because forming the majority would mean admitting them and admitting them would mean owing them. Liberia confirms it and then supplies the variable the general statement leaves open, because Liberia ran both arms of the experiment simultaneously.

Two alien populations, neither speaking English, neither Christian, both arriving into the same small settler world in the same decades. One was formed so thoroughly that its name became the name of the ruling caste. The other was left to the system already in the ground, for ninety-seven years, while the state's own historians noted

that any school it built would have had to contend with the bush school. Language does not distinguish them, nor religion, nor distance, nor any assessment of capacity. What distinguishes them is that the recaptive arrived with nothing but himself, and the indigenous child arrived attached to a country.

Which reverses the expected sequence: the settlement determines the formation policy, not the reverse. It is natural to read formation as the upstream thing — a conqueror decides what kind of people he wants and the land law follows. Here the causation runs the other way and can be watched running. Module 2 showed a settlement engineered so that exclusion required no exclusion clause, resting entirely on a definition of property. That arrangement can survive a great many things, but it cannot survive a generation of interior men raised to read the Constitution in English, hold deeds, meet the franchise qualification and ask the obvious question. Forming them was not expensive. It was *disqualifying*. So the tenure arrangement set the formation policy, and this yields a proposition the collection can carry elsewhere: **read a conquest's land law and you can predict, without further evidence, whose children it will educate.**

A refinement the framework needs stated flatly: what the withheld population received instead was not a residue and was not weaker. Poro was not an old thing left standing because the state had not got round to clearing it. It was a complete formation working every lever the state's own would have worked — an authority whose mark the child credits, a belonging whose loss is unthinkable, a secret held under sacred penalty, a story of being swallowed and reborn, and all of it installed before the child could weigh any of it — plus one the Republic never possessed: it made non-membership a form of non-personhood in the child's own village. To call this "traditional culture surviving colonial neglect" is to describe a rival system of credited authority as though it were folklore. The accurate statement is that in the territory the Republic claimed, every child was being given a citizenship, a set of natural authorities and an account of what is sacred, on a timetable the Republic never contested, by people whose right to do it the Republic never challenged — because challenging it would have meant offering something in its place, and the something would have been admission.

And a confirmation with an edge on it. The order's one large, sustained, successful formation of interior men was the Frontier Force, and it succeeded because the state believed it was safe: a soldier can be made without conceding anything, since rank is not standing. But the levers do not care what an institution intends by them. A unit is a coalition. An officer is a credited authority. An oath is a sacred lock. And a man formed at eighteen into an armed brotherhood whose officers are drawn from a caste he

can never enter has been handed, along with his rifle, an unusually clear account of who his people are and who they are not. That formation was completed. It was completed by the state, deliberately, at the correct age, over seven decades. It is the only formation the Republic ever ran at scale on the interior population, and it is the one the Republic did not survive.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. The description of the landing of the *Pons* recaptives is quoted from the petition of the Executive Committee of the American Colonization Society printed in the United States Congressional Serial Set for the first session of the Thirtieth Congress, in the papers relating to the Society's claim for remuneration; the document is a United States government publication and in the public domain, and I have quoted from the digitised text as published by the Government Publishing Office. Ashmun's account of receiving the sons and subjects of the neighbouring kings for instruction, and of the native youths deserting, is from his *History of the American Colony in Liberia* (1826), pages 19 and 20, checked against the page images as in Module 1. The extracts from Roberts's inaugural and Teage's oration are as quoted and sourced in Module 3.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and reference material, credited and not quoted. The structure and practice of Poro and Sande — the seclusion and its duration, the swallowing by the masked spirit, circumcision and excision, scarification read as teeth marks, the new name, the graded lodges, the office of *zoe*, the political reach of senior Poro officials into chieftaincy, and the treatment of the uninitiated as not a citizen of his own community — is drawn from the standard ethnographic literature descending from G. W. Harley's *Notes on the Poro in Liberia* (1941) and Kenneth Little's work of the 1940s, from Merran Fraenkel's *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* (1964), and from Stephen Ellis's paper on initiation and young soldiers; I have used it as summarised in reference and country-analysis sources rather than from the monographs themselves, and any argument turning on the detail of a particular people's practice should be checked against them. The educational record — the 1912 centralised system covering five coastal counties, mission and private schools as more than three-quarters of facilities before the Second World War, the founding of Liberia College in 1851 and its opening in 1862 with twenty students, and the Booker Washington Institute of 1929 — is from the standard Library of Congress country study of Liberia, which also supplies the observation that schools would have had to contend with Poro and Sande. The ward system, the giving of settler surnames, and the Liberian observation about wards behaving more Congo than the Congoes are from

Liberian commentary and the country study; the last is quoted in the sources from an unpublished manuscript and is treated here as reported. The Christy Commission's findings on pawning, forced labour and the Frontier Force are from the summaries in the 1932 and 1934 House of Lords debates and the contemporaneous United States diplomatic record, both public domain, and from reference accounts of the report; I have not read the report itself and it should be obtained before Module 7.

Contested figures and unresolved points. The total number of recaptured Africans landed in Liberia is given variously at over five thousand and at about six thousand, against an American emigration usually put at fifteen to sixteen thousand; the figures rest on different compilations and the range is reported rather than resolved. The date at which citizenship was formally extended to the indigenous population is given in the sources as both 1904 and 1912, both within Arthur Barclay's presidency, and the discrepancy probably reflects the difference between the hinterland reorganisation and a later legislative act; it is not resolved here and should be established before Module 9. The duration of Poro initiation in the nineteenth century is not securely documented and the sources give figures ranging from several weeks to several years; the shortening over the twentieth century is well attested and the earlier practice is not. The proportion of Liberian surnames of settler origin borne by people of indigenous descent is not established by any count I have seen and is stated here as a qualitative observation found throughout the literature.

MODULE 5

The Money Has Already Been Collected

Module 5: the cost column — why a farmer in the interior, a Kru boatman, a rubber tapper and a poor settler each did what the Republic wanted, priced one at a time; and what happens to compliance when the men sent to collect a tax are not paid and the tax cannot be satisfied by paying it.

The cable

In the late summer of 1930 the American chargé d'affaires in Monrovia, Samuel Reber, sent Washington a telegram of six sentences. The League's commission of inquiry had just finished taking evidence on the coast, and Reber had heard what the government's soldiers were doing in the towns that had testified.

> *I am reliably informed that a frontier force detachment of soldiers is pillaging natives along the Kru Coast. This action is alleged to be taken to compel the natives to pay their hut taxes, although, I am informed by the Supervisor of Internal Revenue, in many of these towns money has already been collected and is awaiting transmission.*

Hold that clause and the whole module opens out of it. The soldiers were in the villages to enforce payment of a tax that had already been paid, and the government's own revenue officer knew it, and the money was sitting in the towns waiting to be carried to Monrovia while the men who had paid it were being robbed.

This is not corruption in the ordinary sense of an official skimming a percentage. It is a structural fact about what the exaction was, and it is the fact that determines what compliance in the Liberian interior could and could not buy. A tax that can be discharged is a price: pay it and the transaction is closed and you are left alone. A tax that continues to be collected after it has been paid is not a price. It is a licence issued to armed men, and the only thing that limits it is what they happen to need that month.

Who was actually being asked, and for what

The system Reber was describing was put in place under Arthur Barclay's reorganisation of the interior after 1904 and ran, in essentials, until the middle of the century. The hinterland was divided into districts, each under a district commissioner responsible to the secretary of the interior. The commissioner advised the paramount

chiefs, presided over customary courts, and decided cases where customary usage and Liberian statute conflicted. But his actual duties, in the country study's summary of them, were three: to collect taxes, to ensure the supply of contract labour from his district, and to keep foreigners out.

Against those duties, the government provided the interior with no services and no schools. The hut tax nonetheless accounted for something close to a third of government revenue — while only a small proportion of what was collected in the hinterland ever reached Monrovia at all. The rate per hut is not established here; the aggregate is. The Liberian government's own return to the American legation in 1922 put internal revenues including hut taxes at $119,241.25 for the six months to December 1921 and $27,344.70 for January to April 1922, and reported that as of July of that year about twenty-eight per cent of the year's hut tax had been collected.

The instrument of collection was the Liberian Frontier Force, five hundred men in 1908 and about six hundred by the First World War, recruited from the interior peoples, and posted deliberately to garrisons outside their own districts. And the Force was not paid. Unpaid and poorly supplied, its soldiers lived on what they could take; annual hut taxes were collected several times a year, depending, in the country study's phrase, on the requirements of the troops in a given area; commissioners used the Force to raid villages and take livestock, to round men up for road work, government farms and porterage, and reports of soldiers abducting women were common.

So the demand on the interior farmer was, in its aggregate: a cash tax on his dwelling, collected an indeterminate number of times a year by soldiers who kept part of it and would come back; unpaid labour on roads and on officials' farms; unpaid porterage, in a country with almost no wheeled transport, which meant carrying loads on his head for days; and a quota of men from his town for contract labour elsewhere.

The problem with a cash tax

The single most revealing sentence in the whole record of this order was written by the American legation in Monrovia in January 1943, in a cable opposing a Liberian minimum-wage bill. Explaining why the bill was unnecessary and would fall only on foreign employers, the legation observed of Firestone's workforce that they already had housing and medical care that existed nowhere else in the country, and added:

> *It is doubtful if another thousand individuals can be found in the country who are employed for a daily cash wage under similar conditions.*

Read that against the hut tax and the arithmetic completes itself. In 1943, ninety-six years after independence and seventeen years into the largest industrial enterprise in West Africa, the American legation's estimate was that outside Firestone there might not be a thousand people in the Republic of Liberia earning a daily cash wage. The rest of the country — some hundreds of thousands of households — was being taxed in money in an economy that produced almost no money.

A tax of that kind is not really a tax. It is a mechanism for producing labour, and it produces it by construction: a man who cannot pay in cash must obtain cash, and the routes to cash were four. He could commute the tax into labour on the roads. He could go to Firestone. He could sign on for Fernando Pó. Or he could pledge a person — and the League's commission found in 1930 that pawning was widespread and amounted to a form of slavery, with the parliamentary summaries reporting children of five and six pawned in perpetuity to pay taxes. The hut tax and the labour system were not two policies. They were one instrument, and the cash denomination was the part that did the work.

Why he complied: the collar, not the rifle

Five or six hundred soldiers cannot hold a country of perhaps a million people, and the interior was full of men with guns of their own. So the question of this module cannot be answered by the Frontier Force. It has to be answered by who actually knocked on the door.

The tax was assessed and collected through the chiefs. State agents, working with Frontier Force soldiers, told the chiefs how many huts they had to account for; the chiefs were permitted to retain a commission on what they raised. That single arrangement is the reason a wildly unjustified exaction could be gathered at all, and it is the direct continuation of Module 4.

The Republic had never formed the interior and had no purchase on what an interior man believed. But it did not need any. The man who came for the money was an elder whose authority the farmer's own formation had installed before he could weigh it — a man whose right to command he had been taught to credit in the bush at twelve, backed by a society whose sanction was expulsion from personhood in his own town. Refusing him was not refusing Monrovia. It was refusing your own. The Republic did not have to manufacture a legitimating belief; it rented one, from the formation it had spent a century refusing to displace, and paid the rent as a percentage of the take.

It should be said that this was not a costless arrangement for the chief either, and that the Barclay system had already altered what a chief was. Paramount chiefs were

increasingly appointed rather than simply recognised, and the reorganisation placed them within a provincial hierarchy answerable to a commissioner. A chief who did not deliver was replaceable and, on the record of the period, detainable. What the state had constructed was a channel in which an authority the people credited was made to carry a demand they did not, with the credit flowing one way and the resentment accumulating at the near end.

The four strata, priced

The interior farmer. A Kpelle, Loma, Gio, Mano or Gola household in the hinterland. Benefit from the Republic: on the record, essentially nil — no schools, no clinics, no courts he could use against a commissioner, no roads he had not built himself under compulsion, and no vote until 1945 and then only if he paid the hut tax. Cost of compliance: the tax, in cash he had to manufacture; labour; porterage; a son for the quota. Cost of refusal: the Force. Villages burned, livestock taken, men rounded up, women taken. Social pressure: the demand came from his own elders. Exit: real, and the most important fact in his column, discussed below.

The Kru. The most instructive stratum, because they had the one asset that changes everything: a marketable skill and a boat. Kru mariners had crewed European vessels for centuries through their own headmen, and their wages were real. When the Republic pressed the hut tax and forced recruitment on the Kru coast, they did not petition. In 1915 they rose, and they raised the Union Jack — declaring themselves subjects of Britain rather than of Monrovia, which is the clearest statement of a cost-benefit judgement in the whole record. The revolt was crushed by the Frontier Force under American officers, with the cruiser *Chester* sent by President Wilson carrying five hundred rifles and a quarter of a million rounds. Ringleaders were hanged. A United States naval officer sent to investigate reported that the revolt had been provoked by heavy taxation and the petty tyranny of Liberian authorities and appointed clan chiefs. In August 1916 the Secretary of State wrote to the American minister that the Department had read "with gratification" his despatch on the crushing of the Kru revolt. The Kru rose again in 1931, and were suppressed again; the reports that reached the League describe burned towns, and a former political prisoner's account of soldiers boasting of cutting children down with cutlasses and throwing them into burning huts.

The Kru column, then, reads: high skill, high mobility, real alternatives, and consequently the lowest tolerance for the arrangement of any group in the country, met with the heaviest force the state ever applied to its own subjects. And the outcome was exit. A writer in 1925 recorded that the Krumen were known throughout West Africa

as the most hardy and efficient seamen on the coast, "but to exercise their craft they have to migrate to the English and French colonies."

The contract labourer. From 1905 an arrangement existed under which recruiters for the cocoa planters of Fernando Pó took men out of the Liberian interior. By 1928 the League's commission found that government officials and Frontier Force soldiers had been raiding and forcibly recruiting native boys for shipment to the island, with recruiting agents — including the President's brother — paid per head; the recruitment was later described in the international record as having been carried on under conditions of criminal compulsion scarcely distinguishable from slave raiding and slave trading. For the man taken, the cost of compliance and the cost of refusal converge, because he was not being asked.

The rubber tapper. The most complicated column, and the one that must not be flattened. From 1926 Firestone held its concession, and by 1930 employed about twenty thousand people. What it offered was, by the standards of the country, extraordinary: a daily cash wage, rice rations, free housing, a hospital, and imported goods sold below cost. Firestone's own account of its recruitment, given to the State Department in 1929, was that knowledge of its wage scale had spread through the interior and that "it was only necessary for us to send word into the interior to obtain all the labor we needed," with the government "not connected with our labor recruiting except that it notified officially its various commissioners and officials up-country that it was agreeable to allowing the natives to seek employment with the Firestone Company if they so desired." The American legation in 1943 said the workers had freely abandoned tribal life and could not be said to be exploited.

Set beside that: the recruitment system established in the 1920s ran through the same chiefs who assessed the hut tax, on quotas, and it was still running decades later — in 1954 approximately sixteen thousand Firestone workers, close to eighty per cent of the workforce, had been sent there by their chiefs rather than having come of their own motion. And the wage was low and got lower; after the Depression the tapping rate was cut to something in the order of nine cents a day.

Both accounts are true, of different men, and the honest reading is that Firestone was simultaneously the best available escape from the district commissioner and a conscription destination — which is exactly what one would expect when the man who fills the labour quota is the man who assesses the tax. For a farmer facing an unpayable cash demand, a plantation that paid cash, fed him and could not be raided by the Frontier Force was an *improvement*, and many walked there. The same plantation, for the man whose name the chief wrote on a list, was where the tax took him.

The poor settler. The stratum most often lost, because "Americo-Liberian" is used as though it named a wealthy class. Most settlers were not wealthy. The great majority farmed smallholdings, and the emigration after 1830 was increasingly of people manumitted on condition of departure, arriving with nothing and with literacy around one in ten. A poor Congo farmer in Grand Bassa in 1900 was not rich and had few prospects.

What he had was a column of benefits that cost the state almost nothing to supply and could not be taken from him. He held his twenty-five acres in fee simple by deed, heritable. He met the franchise qualification, because the qualification was real estate and he had some. He could sue and be heard. He belonged to a church and a lodge that were also the political system. And he stood inside a category of person that the great majority of people in the country could not enter — a distinction which required no wealth at all and which the ward in his kitchen made visible to him every morning.

That is a cheap and extremely effective arrangement, and it is the answer to why an order this thin at the top was never seriously challenged from within its own population. A man with little to lose but a caste position will defend the caste position, because it is the whole of what he has.

Exit, which is the answer

The prompt for this module asks whether the oppressed could simply walk away to a better arrangement. In most cases in this collection the answer is no, and the analysis has to proceed to belief, benefit and force. Liberia is the case where the answer is yes, and where the state's behaviour is best read as a long attempt to manage that fact.

Three exits were open. The Kru could take ship, and did, in numbers, to the English and French colonies where their craft could be practised. The interior peoples straddled borders: the Loma, Kissi, Mano, Gio and Mandingo of the north and east had kin on the other side of lines drawn by treaty with Britain in 1885 and with France in 1892 and after, and the Republic's writ ran, on Britannica's summary of the pre-1907 position, barely twenty miles inland. Walking out was not an expedition; for many towns it was a day's journey. And after 1926 a third exit opened that was internal: the plantation.

The state's responses are the tell. A restriction on interior people travelling to other parts of the country was enacted after independence and is remembered as the forty-mile rule. The Frontier Force was raised in 1908 with the stated mission of patrolling the borders — against British and French encroachment, in the official formulation, but the effect of a garrisoned frontier on a population contemplating departure needs no elaboration. Commissioners were charged with keeping foreigners out. And the

entire apparatus was directed at a population which, unlike a peasantry hemmed in by an ocean or a desert or a landlord's law, could and did leave.

The compliance of the Liberian interior is therefore best predicted not by belief and not by benefit but by distance — to a border, to a beach, or after 1926 to Harbel. The people who complied were substantially the people who could not conveniently get out, and the people who could not get out were the ones furthest from a frontier and without a marketable trade.

Reading the cost column against the framework

The contribution: when the enforcers of an exaction are unpaid, the exaction ceases to be a price and becomes a licence — and an uncapped cost destroys the one thing a heavy but bounded exaction still leaves standing, which is the ability to buy peace by paying.

The corpus has treated the cost dial as something an apex sets: the state calculates what compliance is worth, applies enough pain to make refusal more expensive, and the subject, having done the arithmetic, complies. That model assumes the exaction has a number. Liberia's did not. The Frontier Force was not paid; it therefore lived on what it took; the tax was collected as often as the troops in a district required; and, as Reber's telegram establishes, having paid was not a defence. The number was not set in Monrovia at all. It was set by whoever was standing in the town that week and by what he needed.

Two consequences follow and both are visible in the record.

The first is that **an uncapped cost cannot be planned around, and a subject who cannot plan around a cost has no reason to prefer compliance to any other strategy.** A man facing a heavy but fixed demand can decide to meet it, hate it, and go on farming; the cost is priced into his year. A man facing a demand that will be repeated at the collectors' discretion regardless of payment gains nothing by paying. This is why the Liberian interior produced, over a century, so little of the sullen productive compliance that heavy colonial taxation produced elsewhere, and so much flight — and why the risings, when they came, came from the group with the *most* to lose. The Kru revolted twice not because they were the most oppressed but because they were the only ones with an alternative good enough to make the comparison sharp.

The second is that **the state substituted the chief's borrowed legitimacy for the legitimacy it did not have, and paid him a commission for it.** This is the join to the formation module and it should be stated as a general form: where a conqueror has withheld formation, he has no belief of his own to draw on at the point of collection,

and his cheapest available move is to route the demand through the authority the existing formation already installed — which works, and works well, and transfers the resentment to that authority rather than to himself. It is cheap because it requires no schools and no priests and no century of patient installation. It is expensive in a way that does not appear in any ledger, because what it consumes is the credit of the only institution in the country that was holding the population together, and it consumes it on behalf of a state the population had no reason to credit at all.

A refinement on benefit, offered against the grain of the module's own material. The framework holds that where there is little benefit and no belief in the arrangement's justice, the state must inflict heavy cost. Liberia bears that out at the bottom and complicates it in the middle, because the benefit column was not empty for everyone and its most effective entry cost the state nothing to supply. The poor settler received no money and no land beyond his twenty-five acres, and defended the order for a hundred and thirty-three years. What he received was standing — a heritable, unremovable position above ninety per cent of the people around him, conferred by a definition rather than by an expenditure. **A caste marker is the cheapest benefit an order can pay, because it is created by the exclusion of others rather than by the transfer of anything**, and an order that is too poor to buy loyalty with goods can still buy it with rank. That is not a Liberian peculiarity; it is a general instrument, and this case shows it operating in a population that had itself been on the wrong end of the same instrument one generation earlier.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. The telegram of the Chargé in Liberia, Samuel Reber, to the Secretary of State, on Frontier Force soldiers pillaging along the Kru coast, is quoted from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1930*, volume III; the passage as printed is marked in the volume as a paraphrase of the original cipher telegram, and that qualification is carried here. The 1943 assessment of Liberian wage employment, and the statement that it is doubtful another thousand individuals could be found employed for a daily cash wage, is from the American legation's telegram printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, volume IV. The Firestone Company's account of its recruitment is quoted from the statement of the Firestone position on the forced labour inquiry, enclosed in a letter of 1929 and printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929*, volume III. The Secretary of State's acknowledgement of the crushing of the Kru revolt is from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916*. The Liberian government's revenue returns for 1921–22 are from the Liberian replies printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922*,

volume II. All are United States government publications and in the public domain. The 1925 remark on Kru mariners having to migrate to the English and French colonies to practise their craft is quoted at second hand from a 2023 article in the *Journal of African History*, which cites the original; I have not seen the 1925 source and the chain is stated.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and reference material, credited and not quoted. The structure of hinterland administration after 1904, the district commissioner's three duties, the hut tax as approaching a third of revenue with only a small share reaching Monrovia, the absence of services and schools, the Frontier Force's non-payment and its consequences, the collection of annual taxes several times a year according to troop requirements, and the tribal recruitment of the Force for service outside its own districts, are from the Library of Congress country study of Liberia. The chiefs' commission on the tax and the 1954 figure of approximately sixteen thousand Firestone workers, close to eighty per cent of the workforce, having been sent by their chiefs are from a Verité assessment of the Liberian rubber sector, which cites the underlying historical work; I have not traced the 1954 figure to its source and it should be verified before it is relied on further. The Fernando Pó recruitment arrangements and the League commission's findings are from reference accounts and from the summaries in the 1932 and 1934 House of Lords debates. The Kru revolt of 1915–16, the hoisting of the Union Jack, the despatch of the USS *Chester*, and the American naval officer's finding that heavy taxation and the tyranny of appointed clan chiefs provoked the rising are from the country study and from a 2023 *Journal of African History* article on Kru mariners.

Reported, contested or not established. The rate of the Liberian hut tax per hut is not established here; the aggregate collections quoted above are, and no per-hut figure should be inferred from them. The account of soldiers boasting of killing children at New Sasstown, and the claim that seventy-five chiefs invited to a peace conference at Sinoe in 1916 were seized and executed, reach this study through a Liberian newspaper article quoting the chief Juah Nimene's letter to Lord Cecil and quoting reports of the 1931–32 operations; they are serious allegations resting on a chain I have not verified to its source and are given here as allegations rather than findings. The Firestone tapping rate of about nine cents a day after the Depression reduction is reported in reference material and has not been traced to a company or government record. The forty-mile restriction on interior travel is described in Liberian commentary and I have not found the statute; it is stated here as reported. Liberian population figures for the period are estimates only, for the reason given in the Landscape.

MODULE 6

For the Further Security of the Revenues and Receipts

Module 6: extraction — what was taken, by what instrument, and where it went; and a loan contract, drawn in New York, in which the force that collected the hut tax appears as collateral.

The clause

On 1 September 1926 the Government of Liberia, the Finance Corporation of America and the National City Bank of New York executed an agreement for a loan of five million dollars. Its twelfth article, third paragraph, reads in part:

> *For the further security of the revenues and receipts, the Government shall maintain the Liberian frontier force, and shall further maintain patrol service by sea as may be necessary from time to time... The frontier force shall be administered by the War Department and the strength of the force shall be fixed by agreement between the President of Liberia and the Financial Adviser, and it shall not be increased or reduced in number without the agreement of the Financial Adviser, except temporarily in case of emergency declared to be such by the Government.*

The body described there is the same body the preceding module found in the Kru towns in 1930, robbing people of a tax they had already paid. Here it appears in its other aspect: as a covenant in a bond indenture, maintained for the security of the revenues, at a strength the Liberian government could not reduce without the agreement of an American official appointed on the nomination of the President of the United States.

That is the extraction mechanism of this order in a single provision, and it is worth being precise about what makes it unusual. A colonial state's garrison is a policy: the metropole decides how many men it wants where, and can decide otherwise next year. The Liberian Frontier Force, after September 1926, was a term of a contract. Liberia had covenanted to maintain it. Not as an army, and not as a police, but *for the further security of the revenues and receipts* — which is to say, as collateral.

What was pledged

The rest of the loan agreement establishes what the collateral was securing and who held the keys.

The loan was secured, as the Secretary of State explained to President Coolidge in 1927, "by a first lien on all Liberian export and import duties and on revenues received from head monies." Head monies is the hut tax. The money that Frontier Force soldiers extracted from villages in the interior, several times a year, according to the requirements of the troops in a given district, was pledged in first lien to bondholders in New York.

Article VIII provided that the Government "covenants and agrees to appoint to its service said Financial Adviser, who shall be designated by the President of the United States of America to the President of the Republic of Liberia" — and that this officer "shall at all times be subject to removal by the President of the Republic of Liberia, upon the request of the President of the United States." The Liberian president could dismiss him only when the American president asked him to.

Article IX placed the customs and internal revenue administration under officers nominated by the Financial Adviser, whose names were first to be reported to the Secretary of State of the United States. It fixed the Financial Adviser's salary at $12,500 per annum and capped the aggregate salaries of the remaining supervisory officers at $32,000. Article XII allowed a further $8,000 for the two American officers — a major and a captain — to be recommended to the Frontier Force by the President of the United States. Article XXV provided that disputes go to arbitration, with the third arbitrator appointed by the American Secretary of State.

Set the salaries against the revenue they supervised. The Liberian government's own return to the American legation put internal revenues including hut taxes at $119,241.25 for the six months to December 1921. The American fiscal establishment installed over that revenue was to cost, at the ceilings in the agreement, better than fifty thousand dollars a year.

And Article XI disposed of the loan itself. The first proceeds were to redeem the outstanding bonds of the 1912 refunding loan. Then the costs and expenses of preparing the new agreement and the new bonds, "including fees of the Corporation's counsel." Then $35,000, or such less sum as sufficed, to repay the advances made to Liberia by the United States Treasury under the Second Liberty Loan Act. The Liberian debt to the United States, $35,610.46, was paid in full on 6 July 1927.

A five-million-dollar loan whose first three charges are the old loan, the lawyers who drew the new one, and a debt to the lender's government.

What the concession paid

The loan existed because of a lease, and the lease is in the American diplomatic record in full.

Under the agreement negotiated in 1925 and ratified by the Liberian Legislature on 30 January 1926, Firestone took up to one million acres for fifty years, with an option exercisable after ten years to extend for a further fifty — the origin of the ninety-nine-year figure. The consideration is set out in Article III:

> *As and when the Lessee takes possession of lands selected by him under this Agreement Lessee shall pay to the Government rental at the rate of six (6) cents per acre yearly and every year in advance in gold coin of the United States of the present standard of weight and fineness.*

And a revenue tax, beginning in the seventh year, "equivalent to one per centum of the value of all rubber shipped from Lessee's plantations calculated on the price for such products prevailing in the New York market" — from which, the same paragraph provides, "any expenditures by Lessee for construction and repair of public roads outside his plantations, the location of which roads has been approved by the Government, may be deducted." The one per cent was payable in roads.

Around those two figures Article II built the exemptions. All the lessee's products, machinery, tools, buildings, leasehold interests, improvements, franchises, rights and income were to be "free of and exempt from any internal revenue or other tax, charge, excise or impost except the revenue tax provided for in Article III, Paragraph (d)." All imports for the operation were exempt from customs. Timber sold for export carried a royalty of two cents a cubic foot. Communication lines outside the concession were exempt from taxation so long as they served only the lessee. If Liberia ever granted any other rubber producer better terms in any respect, Article IV made those terms flow automatically to Firestone.

And Article II closed with an undertaking about title and one about labour:

> *The Government warrants to the Lessee the title to all lands selected by him upon which the Government shall accept the rental or compensation as herein provided and will defend and protect such title for the benefit of the Lessee.*
> *The Government further agrees that it will encourage, support and assist the efforts of the Lessee to secure and maintain an adequate labor supply.*

The clause that obliged the lessor to borrow

The last of the general provisions, Article IV, paragraph (k), is the one that makes the whole arrangement a single instrument rather than two:

> *It is further agreed that the Lessee shall use his best efforts to secure either from the Government of the United States or from some other person or persons a loan of not less than two million dollars or more than five million dollars... and the Government of Liberia agrees to accept such loan on such terms if it can be secured within five years from this date.*

A lease in which the lessor binds itself, as a term of the lease, to accept a loan that the lessee undertakes to arrange. Liberia did not solicit the five million dollars and then, separately, grant a concession. It granted the concession and thereby contracted to take the money. Harvey Firestone is generally credited with inserting the loan provision himself at a late stage; whatever the drafting history, the effect on the page is that the consideration flowing from lessee to lessor included an obligation on the lessor to become the lessee's debtor.

The Depression then did what it did to a debtor whose revenues were customs duties on a collapsing trade. Service of the loan consumed a rising share of Liberian revenue through 1930 and 1931; the government fell months behind in paying its own employees; in 1932 President Edwin Barclay approved a moratorium, and the American financial advisers wrote to Washington alleging that Liberia had breached the loan on nine counts. The precise year-by-year ratios of debt service to revenue are not established here.

The labour clause and what was said about it

Now set the covenant in Article II beside what the Firestone Company told the United States government about its recruitment three years later.

The agreement, executed by Firestone and ratified by the Liberian Legislature, contains the sentence: *The Government further agrees that it will encourage, support and assist the efforts of the Lessee to secure and maintain an adequate labor supply.* Article IV(a) reinforces it from the other side, binding the lessee not to import unskilled foreign labour unless the local supply proved inadequate — which fixed the demand onto the Liberian interior and nowhere else.

In 1929, with an international inquiry into forced labour in prospect, the company sent the State Department a statement of its position:

> *Knowledge of our enterprise and wage scale spread throughout the interior and when we were ready to enlarge our operations it was only necessary for us to send word into the interior to obtain all the labor we needed... The Liberian Government is not connected with our labor recruiting except that it notified officially its various commissioners and officials up-country that it was agreeable to allowing the natives to seek employment with the Firestone Company if they so desired.*

The gap between those two documents is the method of this study in its purest form, and it needs no argument laid over it. What the company told Washington was that the government had no connection with its recruitment beyond a permissive notice. What the company had signed was a government covenant to encourage, support and assist the securing and maintenance of its labour supply. The commissioners the "official notification" went to were the same men whose three stated duties were to collect taxes, ensure the supply of contract labour from their districts, and keep foreigners out.

One further provision of the lease belongs here because of what it reveals about who was thought to be paying. Article III(e) required the lessee to arrange with the Liberian Treasury for the collection of poll taxes from his employees, and then set a ceiling: "the poll or hut tax or other similar tax levied on Lessee's employees shall not exceed One Dollar ($1.00) gold per head or its equivalent per annum." The company negotiated, and obtained, a cap on what the Liberian state might levy on the men working its trees. Nobody negotiated a cap for the men who stayed in their villages.

The reserve nobody could invoke

Article IV(f) deals with indigenous land, and it is Module 2's machine visible in a commercial contract:

> *Tribal reserves or lands set aside for the communal use of any tribe within the Republic of Liberia are excluded from the operation of this Agreement. Should any question arise as to the limits and extent of such reserves such questions shall be finally determined by the Secretary of Interior on a reference by the Lessee.*

The protection is real and it is on the face of the instrument. Tribal land is excluded. But the question of where tribal land lies is determined finally by the Liberian Secretary of the Interior — the officer whose district commissioners collected the taxes and filled the labour quotas — and it reaches him only "on a reference by the Lessee." The people

whose reserve it is have no standing to raise the question at all. The clause protects them from everyone except the two parties who signed it.

The second extraction, after 1945

The rubber economy became an iron economy in a single decade and the mechanism was the same.

The free port of Monrovia was completed in 1948. The Bomi Hills magnetite, identified by a Dutch geologist in 1934 and written off by United States Steel in 1938 on the ground that ore could not be shipped by surfboat, became viable the moment there was a wharf; the Liberia Mining Company was formed by the American engineer Lansdell Christie in 1946 and made its first shipment in 1951. The German-Liberian Mining Company followed, and then LAMCO, an American-Swedish-Liberian venture at Nimba. Iron ore exports rose from about $20 million in 1957 to about $106 million in 1966, with something on the order of $400 million of foreign capital invested in the decade. Government revenue rose from about $25 million in 1959 to about $48 million in 1966. In 1967 the mines yielded the government $12.5 million, about a quarter of its revenue. Liberia became the largest iron ore producer in Africa.

Alongside it, in 1948, a second and stranger revenue appeared. The Liberian ship registry was established by a company founded by Edward Stettinius, lately Secretary of State of the United States, to provide owners with a flag under which vessels could be crewed and taxed outside American rules — Panama's officials having by then, in the standard account, begun to demand too much. The registry was administered from the United States by a private American corporation, which remitted a share of the fees to Monrovia. Liberia acquired, and still has, one of the largest merchant fleets in the world, consisting almost entirely of ships that have never called there.

Growth without development

In January 1961 the Liberian government itself, through the American International Cooperation Administration, commissioned a team from Northwestern University to analyse the structure of its economy and measure its performance. The team worked in the country until August 1962. Its report was published in 1966 under the title *Growth Without Development*, and the title is the finding.

The specific mechanism the survey identified is the one worth carrying forward, because it is not the familiar observation that an enclave economy fails to spread. Concession revenue built arterial roads into the countryside — which in any ordinary account is development arriving. What the survey found was that the elite took the

land beside the new roads for their own rubber farms, pushing smallholder rice cultivation further back into the bush; and that the roads brought officials within reach of populations that had previously been beyond it, for labour recruitment and unofficial tax collection.

The road was not a failed development instrument. It was a successful extraction instrument. It moved the frontier of the apparatus described in Module 5 inland, at the expense of the food-growing that the people at the end of it lived on, and it was paid for out of iron ore.

The survey also stated the political arrangement in a sentence: the Americo-Liberian families controlled the country and governed the tribes, about ninety-five per cent of the population, on a colonial pattern of indirect rule. The distribution followed. Where the state took a direct share — the National Iron Ore Company, half held by the Republic — the further tranche of shares sold to Liberians was sold on easy terms to those in a position to buy, which is to say to the people who already held everything else.

Reading extraction against the framework

The contribution: where extraction terminates in a creditor rather than a metropole, the coercive apparatus becomes contractual collateral, and its maintenance stops being a policy the state can change.

The colonial-bend prediction was extraction sorted by caste, and that is confirmed so plainly here that it hardly needs arguing: the tax fell on people who had no vote, was collected by soldiers drawn from those people and posted away from their own districts, and passed through a customs house run by Americans to bondholders in New York, with the domestic share pooling in a few hundred families in Monrovia. What Liberia adds is a different thing, which follows from having no metropole at all.

In an ordinary colony the chain of extraction terminates in a government. That government garrisons the colony because it wants the revenue, and it can decide next year that it wants less, or that the garrison is too expensive, or that the political cost has risen — and the collection is throttled back. Every case in this collection has that valve somewhere. The Liberian chain terminates in a bond, and a bond does not deliberate. Article XII of the 1926 agreement converts the Frontier Force from an instrument the state maintains into an asset the state has pledged: its strength cannot be increased or reduced without the agreement of an official appointed on the nomination of a foreign head of state, because its existence is part of what the lender is holding. **A metropole can lose interest in a colony. A covenant cannot lose interest, and an apparatus**

that has been pledged as security is one that the apex has contracted away its power to stand down.

This also explains a feature of the Liberian record that otherwise looks like pure malice: that the extraction did not slacken when it was internationally embarrassing. It could not. In 1930 the League's commission reported, the government fell, and the exactions continued — because the customs and the head monies were in first lien, the Force was a covenant, and the Depression had made the coverage worse rather than better. The apex was not choosing to squeeze harder. It was in default on an instrument that specified the squeezing apparatus by name.

A second finding, offered as a correction to how development spending is read. The corpus has generally treated infrastructure built out of extraction as a genuine, if incidental, benefit accruing to the ruled — roads and ports and hospitals as the by-product an extractive order leaves behind. The Northwestern survey's road finding is a counter-example precise enough to be worth generalising. **Where the state's presence in a region is itself the extraction, transport into that region is not a benefit contaminated by extraction; it is extraction, delivered in the form of a road.** The test is available and simple: ask whether the people at the far end of the new road were, after it was built, more able or less able to avoid the tax collector and the labour recruiter. In Liberia the answer was less, and the same road took the roadside land for the elite's own rubber and pushed the rice further into the bush.

And the honest counter-column, which this module owes. Liberia in the 1950s and 1960s had one of the highest measured growth rates in the world. Firestone paid cash wages, built a hospital and free housing, and provided the only daily wage employment of any scale in the country. The port was built. The iron industry was real, and for two decades it made Liberia the largest producer in Africa. A tapper at Harbel in 1930 was, by the standards of the interior he came from, better fed, better housed and better doctored, and he had money. None of that is nothing, and any account that treats the concessions as pure theft has to explain why men walked to Harbel from a hundred miles away.

The verdict on it is not this study's; it belongs to the economists the Liberian government itself commissioned and paid, who spent nineteen months in the country and called their report *Growth Without Development*. What this module can add to their title is the mechanism the loan agreement supplies. Growth entered through concessions whose terms were exemption from every tax but one, and that one payable in roads. Development would have required the state to capture and spend a real share of the value — and the state's share of customs and head monies had been assigned, before the first tree was tapped, in first lien.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. All quotations from the Firestone agreement are from the draft of Agreement Number Two between the Government of Liberia and Harvey S. Firestone concerning the lease of one million acres, printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1925*, volume II; the text as ratified by the Liberian Legislature on 30 January 1926 is the executed version of these agreements, and where the ratified text may differ in detail from the printed draft I have relied on the draft as printed and say so here. Note that the printed draft states a term of fifty years with an option in Article IV(j) to extend by a further fifty; the ninety-nine-year figure universally used derives from the exercise of that option and from the executed instruments. All quotations from the loan agreement of 1 September 1926 — Articles VIII, IX, XI, XII and XXV — are as set out by Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg in his letter to President Coolidge printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1927*, volume III, which reproduces the articles verbatim; I have not seen the loan agreement itself and the chain is stated. The characterisation of the security as a first lien on export and import duties and on revenues received from head monies, the salary figures, the appointment of Sidney De la Rue, and the payment of the Liberian debt to the United States of $35,610.46 on 6 July are from the same letter. Firestone's 1929 statement on labour recruitment is from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929*, volume III. Liberian revenue returns for 1921–22 are from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922*, volume II. All are United States government publications in the public domain.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and reference material, credited and not quoted. The 1912 loan of $1.7 million, its international receivership and American receiver general, are from the Library of Congress country study of Liberia. The history of the Bomi Hills deposit — Terpstra's identification in 1934, the United States Steel report of 1938, Lansdell Christie's Liberia Mining Company of 1946, the completion of the free port in 1948 and the first shipment in 1951 — is from a published study of Liberian ports. The iron ore export and revenue series ($20 million to $106 million, 1957–66; government revenue $25 million to $48 million, 1959–66; $12.5 million from the mines in 1967 as a quarter of revenue; roughly $400 million of foreign investment in the decade) is taken from an International Growth Centre case study and an Oxford volume chapter, both of which cite Clower and colleagues and contemporary Liberian sources; I have not gone behind them to the primary series. The findings of *Growth Without Development* — including the survey's account of roads displacing smallholder rice cultivation and bringing officials within reach for labour recruitment and unofficial tax collection, and its characterisation of Americo-Liberian rule over about ninety-five per cent of the population on a colonial pattern of

indirect rule — are paraphrased from that book as quoted and cited in the Oxford chapter; I have not read the book itself, and it should be obtained before any further weight is placed on its figures. The origin of the ship registry in 1948 with a company founded by Edward Stettinius, its purpose in exempting owners from American labour, wage and tax rules, and its administration from the United States with a share of fees remitted to Monrovia, are from reference accounts and from Rodney Carlisle's 1980 *Business History Review* article, which I have not read. The National Iron Ore Company share arrangement is from the Oxford chapter, citing Liberian sources.

Contested or not established. The rental figure is given in some accounts as one dollar an acre and in others as six cents; the printed agreement quoted here specifies six cents per acre for the million-acre lease, and the higher figure appears to relate to the earlier and much smaller Mount Barclay lease of 1924. The revenue tax on rubber is given in the printed agreement as one per cent and in at least one secondary account as two and a half per cent; the discrepancy is not resolved here and the printed text is followed. The interest rate on the 1926 loan is generally given as seven per cent and one contemporary American estimate is said to have put the effective rate far higher; neither figure has been verified against the loan agreement. The year-by-year ratio of debt service to Liberian revenue between 1929 and 1932, and the figure of $398,000 a year for foreign experts, appear in secondary and non-scholarly sources and are not relied on here. The 1932 moratorium and the advisers' allegation of nine breaches are reported rather than verified.

MODULE 7

Drawn Up by the President of Liberia Himself

Module 7: information and suppression — an order that could not censor its audience because its audience lived abroad, and what it did instead: wrote the terms of the inquiry into itself, and prosecuted the people who testified.

What this module expected to find

Run this station of the template over the European colonial orders and the censor is not where one looks for him. Censorship exists, sometimes heavily, but it faces inward at the conquered rather than homeward at the public paying for the conquest. Toward the metropole there is mostly nothing — not because the facts were hidden but because they travelled freely, were printed in official reports and debated in parliaments, and moved nothing. The register at the metropolitan end is not suppression. It is inattention, and an order that reads its audience accurately does not buy a censor it does not need.

That finding carries a prediction, and Liberia is the case built to test it. If suppression intensity measures the audience's threshold rather than the regime's brutality, then an order whose audience is *attentive* should suppress. And Liberia's audience was as attentive as any in the record. It had no metropole and no licensor, but from Module 3 it had a jury — the nations of Christendom, from whom it needed comity — and that jury had a motive to be interested, because Britain and France were pressed against its borders and had spent forty years taking pieces of it. A finding of misgovernment against Liberia was not, for those governments, an embarrassment to be managed. It was an opportunity.

So the prediction going in was that Liberia, unlike Algeria or Northern Nigeria, would pay for concealment.

It did not. What follows is what it did instead, and why the difference is not a refutation.

The facts travelled, and travelled fast

The Fernando Pó traffic had been running since about 1905. In 1929 an American missionary in Liberia reported to Washington that Liberian officials were using soldiers

to gather tribal people for shipment to the island. The State Department took it up. Secretary of State Stimson sent a sharply worded note repeating the charges and calling for the punishment of the guilty. The Liberian government denied them, and then invited a commission of inquiry from the League of Nations.

The commission — Cuthbert Christy for the League, Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University appointed by President Hoover, and the former Liberian president Arthur Barclay for Liberia — began work on 8 April 1930 and submitted its report in December. It found that forced labour had been used for public purposes and diverted to the private farms of officials; that as recently as 1928 government officials and Frontier Force soldiers had been raiding and forcibly recruiting boys for shipment to Fernando Pó, with recruiting agents including the President's brother paid per head; that domestic and tribal slavery existed; that pawning of persons, including children, was widespread and amounted to a form of slavery; and that the Frontier Force had been brutal in suppressing resistance to forced labour. The report was published. Within weeks Vice-President Allen Yancy had been impeached and President Charles King had resigned.

Now compare the neighbourhood. The same years and the same coast contained the aftermath of the Congo, the labour regimes of French Equatorial Africa, and the São Tomé and Angolan systems that had produced their own scandal a generation earlier and outlived it. Those orders ran longer, over larger populations, with heavier mortality, and were audited late, partially, or not at all. Liberia's traffic became notorious in 1929 and had cost the country its president by the end of 1930.

That is not a difference in concealment. Nothing was concealed in either direction. It is a difference in who was watching, and why.

Why concealment was not available

Before treating the absence of a censor as a choice, it is worth establishing that it was not one.

Liberia had no jurisdiction over any part of the channel that carried the facts. The Kru coast was a day's sail from British Sierra Leone, and Kru mariners crewed British and French ships and had been petitioning British consuls for decades — in 1915 they had raised the Union Jack. American missionaries were resident inland. The American legation sat in Monrovia and reported by cable. The customs house was run by an American Financial Adviser appointed on the nomination of the President of the United States, with an American Supervisor of Internal Revenue under him, both of whom saw every figure. Two American officers served in the Frontier Force. Firestone had an American staff of its own throughout the interior.

An order in that position could not have suppressed the traffic's existence if it had spent everything it had. There was no press to close, because the press that mattered was in London and New York; no dispatch to intercept, because the dispatches went out under American seal; and no witness to isolate, because the witnesses could walk to a foreign consulate.

This matters for reading the European cases, and it should be said plainly. The Empty Column found that colonial orders bought little suppression because inattention made it unnecessary. Liberia is the case where inattention was absent — and it establishes that where the audience *was* attentive, the order did not shrug. It went to considerable trouble. It simply had no censorship to buy.

What it did instead, first: it wrote the terms

Lord Lugard, describing the affair to the House of Lords on 25 April 1934, recorded the arrangement precisely:

> *A Commission of three men was despatched, two of them negroes appointed by the United States of America and Liberia respectively; the third, Dr. Christy, the nominee of the League, was a man of sound judgment with exceptionally wide experience in many parts of Africa, including some time with me in Nigeria. The terms of reference were drawn up by the President of Liberia himself.*

That last sentence is the strategy. Faced with an inquiry it could not prevent, the Liberian government asked for it, defined its scope, and seated one of its own former presidents on the panel of three. Lugard reports it as evidence of the report's fairness — the inquiry cannot be said to have been rigged against a country that wrote its own terms of reference — and he is right about that. But it is also, read from the other end, the only move available to an order that has to be inspected and would like to influence what is looked at.

Whether it worked is disputed and the dispute is worth recording. One scholarly reading of the report notes that it condemned Liberia — the supplier of the labour — without addressing the Spanish colonial government that was the source of demand, and that it gave Firestone a clean bill of health on recruitment, a verdict the Northwestern economists reviewing the same system four decades later did not share. The commission found what its terms directed it to find, and its terms had been drafted in Monrovia.

The remedy that arrived instead

What the audit then produced was the thing eighty years of robe-work had been built to prevent.

His Majesty's Government refused to recognise the Barclay administration, and in January 1931 instructed its chargé d'affaires to inform Monrovia that it regarded the report as a "shocking indictment" and was convinced that Liberia could not reform without assistance from outside. In the same month, on the American diplomatic record, the British government was contemplating suggesting to Liberia that it ask the League for an international commission of control to take over the country, and that it request a loan from the League. The plan that emerged proposed foreign district commissioners, one from each of several nations, placed in charge of the whole country and reporting to the League rather than to the Liberian government.

Barclay refused it, on the ground that it would be tantamount to abrogating the sovereignty of Liberia. Non-recognition ran on for years; the plan died in Geneva in 1933 and 1934 amid Liberian counter-proposals and American reservations.

So the sequence is: a government invites an inquiry, drafts its terms, is condemned by it, loses its president, and is then offered a remedy that would have ended its self-government — and survives by refusing. Whatever else the 1930 crisis was, it was the moment at which the two ends of the seam met in the same room, and the meeting nearly cost the Republic its existence.

What it did instead, second: it went after the witnesses

Here is where the suppression actually is, and it is not in a press law.

The commission took evidence on the Kru coast. Kru paramount chiefs and representatives testified to it. In the late summer of 1930, immediately afterwards, the American chargé cabled Washington:

> *I am reliably informed that a frontier force detachment of soldiers is pillaging natives along the Kru Coast... These acts of soldiers recently sent to the coast are, it is feared, in retaliation against the paramount chiefs and other Kru representatives for their testimony before the International Commission. Should this policy be continued, organized opposition on the part of the natives may be expected to follow, with the creation of a situation of virtual revolt, in regard to which other nations will find it difficult to refrain from taking action.*

The retaliation was for the testimony. The chargé's closing sentence names the calculation on both sides: the government was punishing the witnesses, and the punishing was itself likely to produce the intervention the government most feared.

It continued. The Kru rose again in 1931 and were suppressed again, and in February 1932 the British Embassy in Washington proposed joint British, French and American representations in Monrovia over reports of renewed oppression of the Kru peoples by the Frontier Force. The chief the sources call Juah Nimene wrote to Lord Cecil at the League's Liberia Committee saying that he expected to be arrested like the Nana Kru chiefs then in custody at Sinoe.

And the pattern held for two decades. Didwho Twe, the Kru who had been identified by the Barclay government as the educated hand behind the coastal resistance, went on to found an opposition party. In July 1950 his party's application for certification was refused. In August he was arrested for alleged seditious activities, and released on undertakings so that he could travel to the United States for surgery — where, in the words of a True Whig account reported by the American legation, he disseminated critical propaganda concerning the Liberian government. He returned in April 1951, was nominated for the presidency, and was estopped from standing on the ground that his party had not registered him more than sixty days before the poll. Tubman went to the electorate unopposed. Twe's party then wrote to the President, to the United Nations, to the United States and to other international bodies, complaining that its right to contest the election had been violated — and the government treated the appeal to foreign entities as an interference in Liberian domestic affairs amounting to treason, and moved to arrest the leadership.

Read the two decades together. In 1930 the offence was testifying to a commission. In 1951 the offence was writing to the United Nations. In neither case was the government trying to stop a fact from being true, or even from being said. It was punishing the act of saying it *to them*.

The domestic register, which was different

Inside the country there was ordinary suppression of the ordinary kind, and it is worth distinguishing from the above because the penalties differ.

Sedition, libel and slander statutes protected officials from most forms of criticism, and editors and reporters were jailed and banned periodically. Reports from the Liberian press-history literature record a journalist sentenced to fifteen years in 1945, and nine journalists arrested in 1955 for editorials against Tubman and the True Whig Party; Tuan Wreh was jailed and, in the standard account, paraded through the streets of Monrovia. Albert Porte, a Crozerville schoolteacher, published pamphlets attacking

the government from the 1920s to the 1970s — he was harassed and imprisoned repeatedly, and he went on publishing for six decades, selling his pamphlets on the pavement. When in 1951 he wrote an open letter questioning Tubman's purchase of a yacht at public expense, the President wrote back at length, told him his spirit appeared to be anarchical and that this was an evil spirit and an evil eye, and invited him to come on a cruise.

That is a recognisable register: intimidation, intermittent imprisonment, and a good deal of tolerance at the edges. Porte died in his bed in 1986 having criticised four administrations. Twe, who wrote to the League and then to the United Nations, was charged with sedition and then faced treason. The difference between the two men is not the severity of what they said. It is the address on the envelope.

Reading information and suppression against the framework

The contribution: suppression *intensity* measures the audience's threshold, but suppression *location* measures the order's jurisdiction — and where the audience that matters lies outside the order's reach, suppression relocates from the publication to the witness, and the governing offence shifts from sedition to treason.

The Empty Column's first finding held that an order buys concealment only where its audience's tolerance runs below the fact, and that publication is the tell of a belief that took while concealment is the tell of a constituency that would act. Liberia confirms the rule and then adds the variable it does not contain.

Liberia's audience would have acted, and did. The threshold was low; the constituency was Britain, France, the League and the American State Department, all of whom had reason to be interested and one of whom drafted a plan to take the country over. On the paper's own logic this is exactly the configuration in which an order pays for a censor.

It bought none, because a censor is a jurisdictional instrument and Liberia had jurisdiction over nothing that mattered. The channel ran through foreign consulates, foreign missionaries, foreign shipping, a foreign-run customs house and a foreign-officered army. The comparison with the European cases is therefore sharper than it first appears, and it runs the opposite way from the sympathetic reading. **The European powers did not censor because they did not need to; Liberia did not censor because it could not.** Both orders published everything. Only one of them would have preferred otherwise.

What is available to an order in that position is the two ends of the channel that do lie inside its borders. The first is the inquiry's own frame — hence the invitation, the

drafting of the terms of reference by the President himself, and the seating of a former Liberian president among three commissioners. The second is the human being who supplies the evidence — hence the Frontier Force detachments on the Kru coast in the weeks after the commission left, and hence a treason charge in 1951 for writing to the United Nations.

That yields a diagnostic worth carrying to other cases. **In an order that answers to an audience it cannot reach, look for the suppression not in the press laws but in the law of treason, and look for its victims not among editors but among witnesses, petitioners and delegates.** Where the seam runs abroad and the order cannot follow it, the only remaining point of control is the crossing itself — and the characteristic crime becomes not saying the thing but carrying it out of the country.

A second finding, confirming the Empty Column's fourth: the exposure threshold is a function of whose ledger the correction lands on, and Liberia is the clean demonstration. The republic was audited within about five years of the Fernando Pó traffic becoming notorious, and the audit cost it its head of state, its diplomatic recognition and very nearly its independence — for conduct that neighbouring empires ran on a larger scale for longer without any comparable consequence. President King's characterisation of the charge as malicious propaganda used by the colonial powers to discredit the republic was, as a description of the asymmetry, substantially accurate.

And it does not exculpate. Both things are true and the module has to hold them at once: the conduct the commission found was real, and the reason it was found was that finding it cost the finders nothing. Britain wanted an international commission of control and got as far as drafting one. France held territory it had taken from Liberia by treaty and wanted more. The United States wanted the concession and the loan secured and the coast in friendly hands. Not one of those governments would have to explain to its own electorate any cost arising from correcting Liberia, whereas every one of them would have had to explain a great deal arising from correcting itself. **A liberal power audits fastest where the finding is convenient**, and the speed of the Liberian audit measures the convenience rather than the offence.

And a note against the paper's own falsification test. The Empty Column offers to be broken by a case of costly concealment against a demonstrably indifferent public. Liberia supplies the mirror image rather than the refutation — a demonstrably *attentive* public, an order that would plainly have paid for concealment, and no concealment purchased because none was for sale. That is not a counter-example. It is the control that makes the original finding stronger, because it shows the European

silence toward the metropole was a reading of the audience and not a limit of capability. Where the audience was watching, the order tried everything it had.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. Lord Lugard's account of the commission's composition and of the terms of reference having been drawn up by the President of Liberia is from the House of Lords debate of 25 April 1934, as printed in Hansard. The characterisation of the report as a "shocking indictment" and the British refusal of recognition are from the same debate, which quotes the instruction of January 1931. The chargé's telegram on Frontier Force retaliation against Kru witnesses is from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1930*, volume III, where it is printed as a paraphrase of the original cipher telegram; that qualification is carried here. The British contemplation of an international commission of control to take over the country, and of a League loan, is from the memorandum of a conversation with the British Ambassador of 14 January 1931, as calendared in the list of papers to *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1931*, volume II. The British proposal of joint representations over renewed oppression of the Kru is from the Secretary of State's reply to the British Ambassador printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1932*, volume II. The account of Didwho Twe's arrest for sedition in August 1950, his release for surgery, his estoppel from the 1951 election on the sixty-day rule, and the True Whig characterisation of his activity in the United States, is from the American legation's despatch printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, volume V. All are public-domain government publications.

Paraphrased from reference material and modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The missionary report of 1929, Secretary Stimson's note, King's characterisation of the charges as malicious propaganda used by the colonial powers to discredit the republic, the composition and dates of the commission, the impeachment of Yancy and the resignation of King, and the League plan for foreign district commissioners reporting to Geneva, are from the Library of Congress country study of Liberia and from reference accounts of the Christy Commission; King's phrase reaches this study through that summary rather than from his own text and is treated as reported. The commission's findings on forced labour, the Fernando Pó recruitment, pawning and the Frontier Force are as summarised in the 1932 and 1934 House of Lords debates, in the American diplomatic record, and in reference accounts; I have not read the report itself, and it should be obtained before any of its findings are quoted verbatim. The criticism that the report condemned the supplier without addressing Spanish colonial demand, and gave Firestone a clean bill of health, is a scholarly reading

advanced in a published study of the Fernando Pó labour crisis and is credited as that author's. Twe's party's appeal to the United Nations and other bodies, and the government's treatment of that appeal as treason, are from reference accounts of Twe's career; the government's own words are not quoted here because I have not seen them.

Reported, contested or not established. The Liberian press-history material — a journalist sentenced to fifteen years in 1945, nine journalists arrested in 1955, and the treatment of Tuan Wreh — comes from Liberian journalism-history articles which do not cite their sources, and is reported rather than established. Tubman's reply to Albert Porte about an anarchical spirit is quoted in secondary Liberian commentary and reaches this study at second hand. The account of Juah Nimene's letter to Lord Cecil is as noted in Module 5, resting on a chain not verified to its source. The date at which the Fernando Pó recruitment arrangement began is given as 1905 in reference accounts and is not independently checked here.

MODULE 8

During the Pleasure of the President

Module 8: the default — how a hierarchy so poor it could pay almost nobody arranged itself so that every man in it defended the whole by defending his own place; and why the one asset it distributed in unlimited quantity was the one that could not be shared out.

The arrangement failing, once, in 1871

Begin with the exception, because the arrangement that held for a century was built out of the wreckage of the one that did not.

By the 1860s the settler community had split along a line that had nothing to do with the people it governed. On one side stood the Republican Party: the lighter-skinned, coastal, mercantile families of Monrovia, who had furnished every president since 1848. On the other, an alliance of mostly dark-skinned upriver planters and the dark-skinned faction among the coastal merchants, organised from 1869 as the True Whig Party. Edward James Roye, a dark-skinned Ohio-born merchant who had been Chief Justice, won the election of 1869 as the first True Whig and took office in January 1870.

What followed is instructive because it was a constitutional dispute in which both parties were sincere and neither had anywhere to take it. A referendum to extend the presidential term from two years to four passed the House but not the Senate and was resubmitted; the Republicans refused to recognise the result, held their own election in May 1871 and declared Joseph Jenkins Roberts elected unopposed; the True Whigs regarded that election as void and did not participate. Then in October a British loan negotiated by Roye's government — on terms widely and correctly regarded as ruinous — brought the quarrel into the streets. There were riots and street fights between the two sides' supporters. Delegations demanded Roye's resignation; he refused and declared a state of emergency; on 28 October a Republican mob arrested him. An executive committee of three took charge, then handed the presidency to Roye's own vice-president to preserve the appearance of constitutional succession. Roye was dead by February 1872, in prison or, on other accounts, drowned attempting to reach a British vessel.

Two things about that episode set up everything after it. First, the fight was not about the indigenous population and not about policy. It was about who held the offices and who controlled a loan. Second, and decisively, there was no institution in

the country capable of settling it. The constitution was the thing in dispute; the courts were staffed by the disputants; the parties had no forum in common. A settler order with fewer than twenty thousand people in it had just killed a president over a question of tenure.

The founding move: widening the inside once, at no cost

The True Whigs lost the presidency, spent seven years out of power, and came back in 1878 under Anthony Gardiner. They did not lose it again for a hundred and one years.

What changed is recorded briefly in the Liberian accounts and it is exact: on regrouping, the party brought the Congoes into it, and thereby increased its numbers.

The Congoes were the recaptives — the several thousand Africans taken from slave ships by the American squadron and landed in Liberia, whom Module 4 showed being formed so completely into the settler world that their name became the name of the ruling caste. They spoke English, worshipped in settler churches, carried settler surnames, and held their land, where they held any, by the same deeds. And they had no ancestral claim to a foot of Liberian soil.

That is the founding move of the default, and its logic is worth stating flatly. **A caste boundary can be widened cheaply exactly once: by admitting the people who arrive with nothing to ask for.** The Congoes added numbers to the inside without adding a single claimant to the country, and the party that absorbed them acquired a permanent electoral majority within the only electorate that existed. After 1878 the Republicans withered, most Americo-Liberians transferred their support, and the political question in Liberia ceased to be which party would govern.

What each man was defending

Now the machinery, position by position, because a default is not a doctrine but a set of arrangements in which the arithmetic works out the same way for everyone.

The president, and the clause that made him the sole source of tenure. Article III, section 5 of the Constitution of 1847:

> *All Ambassadors and other public Ministers, and Consuls, the Secretary of State, of War, of the Treasury and of the Navy, the Attorney General, and Post Master General, shall hold their offices during the pleasure of the President. All justices of peace, sheriffs, coroners, Marshalls, clerks of courts, registers, and notaries public, shall hold their offices for the term of two years from the date of their respective*

commissions; but may be removed from office within that time by the President, at his pleasure: and all other officers whose term of office may not be otherwise limited by law, shall hold their offices during the pleasure of the President.

Read as a distribution machine rather than as an executive-powers clause, that provision does two things at once. It makes every office in the country below the legislature and the Supreme Court a gift held at will — so the cost of falling out with the apex is total and immediate, and falls on the officeholder's whole household, since his dependants' standing derives from his. And it makes those costs perfectly individual. Any officeholder can be removed without any other officeholder being touched, which means no combination of them can form in advance, because each has to weigh the certainty of his own removal against the possibility of a collective outcome he cannot verify anyone else is committed to. Article V, section 5 provided that presidential elections should follow every two years; in practice the presidency was held for eight, sixteen and twenty-seven years by single men, and after 1878 the party's nomination was the election.

The party, which was the only route. Opposition parties were never outlawed, and that is the point rather than an exception to it. The True Whig arrangement did not need a prohibition because it had absorbed every reason to join anything else: nomination controlled election, election controlled office, office controlled income, and party affiliation was a practical condition of civil employment. A man with a grievance could pursue it inside the party at some cost, or outside it at the cost of everything.

The lodge, which supplied what 1871 had lacked. The Grand Lodge of Liberia was founded on 22 September 1867 — two years before the True Whig Party — in the Prince Hall tradition, the first independent Grand Lodge in Africa. Its membership was in practice confined to Americo-Liberians; presidents were Masons; and the standard accounts describe the Order and the Party as working in tandem for a century. What a fraternal order of that kind supplies to a governing class is precisely the thing that was missing in October 1871: a room. Degrees and oaths make the arrangement's insiders identifiable to one another and obligate them by something other than momentary interest; and a lodge provides a place where a quarrel between two powerful men can be settled before it reaches the constitution, which is where the quarrel of 1871 went and where it could not be settled at all.

The household, which was a patronage system in miniature. The elite families intermarried; the classic study of the period is titled, accurately, *The Evolution of Privilege*. Around each prominent household stood a body of dependants: kin, godchildren, and the wards described in Module 4 — indigenous children raised in the

house, baptised there, bearing the family's surname. A ward who rose did so through the household, and his rise was the household head's asset. So the unit of the arrangement was not the individual officeholder but the establishment he headed, and to break with the party was to strip a dozen people of their footing at once.

The commissioner and the chief, who were paid in permission. Module 5 established the mechanism: the district commissioner's stated duties were to collect taxes, ensure the supply of contract labour, and keep foreigners out; the paramount chief who assessed the huts retained a commission; the Frontier Force was unpaid and lived on what it took. None of these men was being bought with a salary the treasury could not afford. Each was being licensed to take, and a licence is revocable at pleasure by the man in the clause above.

The poor settler, who received nothing and defended it anyway. This is the load-bearing case and the one an account of Liberia most often misses. Most Americo-Liberians were not rich, held no office, and saw none of the concession money. What each held was a deed, a vote, and a position defined by the exclusion of ninety-odd per cent of the people around him — a position that no president could revoke, that cost the state nothing to confer, and that made a smallholder in Grand Bassa an unquestioned superior to a Kpelle elder with four times his land.

Why men who disliked each other held it up

The brief's question can now be answered with the arrangement in view, and Liberia's answer has an unusual shape.

Four of the reasons are ordinary. The party was the only route, so quarrels had to be conducted inside it. The lodge gave those quarrels a forum. Every office was revocable individually, so no faction could accumulate an independent base. And the households were interlocked by marriage, so a break was a break with one's in-laws.

The fifth is the one that distinguishes this case. **The asset every member held was jointly owned and could not be defended factionally.** Roye and Roberts could fight each other over offices and loans because both stood inside the boundary and neither's position depended on the other's defeat. What neither could do — what no Liberian faction ever did until the very end — was recruit the excluded majority as allies against a rival faction of settlers. To do so would have been to admit the people whose exclusion constituted the prize. A Liberian politician could destroy his rival; he could not enlarge his own coalition downward without destroying the value of the thing he was fighting for.

That is why a hierarchy this small, this poor and this quarrelsome held together for a century. It was not consensus and it was not affection. It was that the one move which

would have given a losing faction an overwhelming numerical advantage was the one move that would have made winning worthless.

Tubman, and the widening that could not be paid for

William Tubman took office in January 1944 and governed for twenty-seven years, and he did something no previous president had attempted: he began, deliberately and at scale, to bring the excluded in.

He was well placed to. A Maryland County man and a Monrovia outsider, he had argued in the Senate from the 1920s for extending constitutional rights to indigenous Liberians, and he built his own political base among them rather than among the capital's families. The franchise was extended to citizens of the interior provinces in 1945, on condition of paying the hut tax, and to women in 1946. Chiefs were brought into the national arrangement, interior representation followed, indigenous men entered offices, and the ward-descended began to appear in the professions.

And for the first time there was money to do it with. The Open Door brought the iron concessions; exports of ore rose from about $20 million in 1957 to about $106 million in 1966; government revenue nearly doubled between 1959 and 1966; the shipping registry paid in hard currency. The arrangement, poor for a century, suddenly had a divisible good.

Tubman spent it, and the spending is the reason he is remembered as the father of modern Liberia and the reason the whole thing fell nine years after his death. Because he was now distributing in two currencies at once, and only one of them could be manufactured.

Money is divisible. A new office, a new road, a scholarship, a place in the legislature: each of these can be given to a new man without being taken from an old one, and an order with rising revenue can go on making them indefinitely. Rank is not divisible. The value of standing inside the boundary is constituted by the number of people standing outside it, and there is no way to admit a man to a caste without withdrawing something from every existing member — not a payment, but the scarcity that made the payment worth having.

So every act of unification was simultaneously a gift to one man and a levy on tens of thousands, and the levy appeared in no account, was voted on by nobody, and could not be compensated, because what it took was not money.

Where the fracture came, and from whom

The brief's other question is where a default breaks, and the answer it predicts is a group with standing and means that stops benefiting. Liberia's fracture came from exactly there, and the group was one the arrangement had manufactured itself.

The opposition that formed in the 1970s was not staffed by the excluded. It was staffed by the incorporated. Gabriel Baccus Matthews, who founded the Progressive Alliance of Liberia in the United States, was a Liberian foreign service officer who had been dismissed. Togba-Nah Tipoteh, who led the Movement for Justice in Africa, was an economist with a doctorate. Henry Fahnbulleh senior, jailed under Tubman, was an ambassador. These were men produced by Tubman's schools, Tubman's scholarships and Tubman's unification — given standing, credentials, professions and offices, and then finding that the arrangement had a ceiling in it that no amount of qualification would raise.

An order that forms people it cannot promote has manufactured its own opposition to specification, and the better it forms them the better the opposition it gets. The Kenya case in this collection shows the same mechanism producing the same result from a much smaller cohort. What is distinctive in Liberia is that the ceiling was not a rule anybody could point to. Module 2 established that the exclusion had never been written into a clause; by the 1970s it was not written anywhere at all, since the franchise had been extended, the counties created and the offices opened. It was simply that the arrangement's summit remained where it had been, held by the same interlocked households, and every man who reached the last step before it discovered that the last step was the one that did not exist.

The apex as competitor

The final element is the one that turned a slow fracture into a break, and it is a repetition.

In 1871 the immediate trigger was a loan: the apex had negotiated, on its own account, a revenue that the rest of the arrangement regarded as improperly taken, and the arrangement removed him. A century later the pattern recurs twice in the same administration.

When William Tolbert succeeded Tubman in 1971 he made his brother Stephen Tolbert Finance Minister, and on one Liberian insider's account Stephen changed the standing arrangement by which consular fees collected at Liberian missions abroad were used to pay the mission's staff, directing instead that all fees be forwarded to Monrovia and salaries paid centrally. That is a small administrative change and it is a

direct withdrawal of a licence to take — precisely the currency in which the arrangement paid its middle ranks. Baccus Matthews was a foreign service officer at the time.

Then, in her annual report for 1979, the Agriculture Minister recommended raising the price of imported rice, to give local growers an incentive under the government's own food-production programme. The Tolbert family were among the country's substantial rice producers. The government's answer was that only imported rice was affected and that the object was self-sufficiency; Liberia was importing something like a quarter of its rice consumption and the reasoning was defensible on its face. It made no difference. On 14 April 1979 a demonstration called against the increase turned into a riot in Monrovia that the government lost control of within an hour, and which it put down with the Executive Mansion Guard because the disciplined battalion had been passed over. The Americans in the country were, on the record afterwards, shocked at the speed of the collapse.

What was violated was not a rule about corruption. It was the apex's role in the arrangement. **In a default, the apex's function is to guarantee places, not to occupy the best one**, and members will tolerate enormous inequality of outcome from a distributor while tolerating none at all from a competitor. Roye's loan, Stephen Tolbert's consular fees and the price of rice are the same offence committed three times, and on the third the arrangement did not have an executive committee of three to hand it to. It had a barracks.

Reading the default against the framework

The contribution: a default built on a boundary rather than on offices is the cheapest arrangement available to a poor order, and the only one that cannot be widened — because the good it distributes is constituted by exclusion, so every admission is an uncompensated withdrawal from every existing holder.

The collection's account of the default has so far run on divisible goods. An order settles land on its conquerors, or offices on its notables, or exemptions on its clergy, and each holder defends the whole while defending his own portion. Such arrangements can absorb pressure, because the goods can be extended: another estate, another sinecure, another seat. That is why a wealthy order under challenge can usually buy its way out.

Liberia had almost nothing divisible for a century and a quarter. Its treasury was in receivership from 1912, in first lien from 1926, and cash-poor until the iron came in the 1950s. It could not pay its own soldiers. What it could distribute without limit was

rank — a marker created by definition rather than by expenditure, conferred at birth, unrevokable by any president, and free.

That is why the arrangement was so durable. It cost nothing to run, and it recruited defenders who were never paid. A hundred and one years of unbroken single-party government, with no standing army until 1908 and no army worth the name until much later, is a remarkable return on an outlay of zero, and the Western governments of the period were not wrong to regard Liberia as a model of stability in its region.

And it is why the arrangement could not be reformed. Three consequences follow, and they are offered as portable.

First, a diagnostic. The tell of a boundary-based default is a ruling group containing a large number of people who receive nothing material from the arrangement and defend it with everything they have. Where that is found, expect the order to be unusually cheap, unusually long-lived, and structurally unable to reform, because the concession that would relieve the pressure is the same act that dispossesses its own base.

Second, a correction to how incorporation policies are read. Tubman's unification is generally assessed as insufficient — too slow, too shallow, never followed through. That reading assumes the failure was of will. The structural reading is that it was self-consuming from the first day: each admission paid one new man in a currency the state could print and charged every existing member in a currency it could not. An order in that position does not have a reform it is failing to carry out. It has a reform whose completion is identical with its dissolution, which is why such orders characteristically incorporate for decades and then break, rather than either reforming or holding.

Third, a rule about the apex. In a distributive default the apex is the guarantor of places and not a party to the competition for them, and the members will accept extraordinary inequality from a distributor and none from a rival. Liberia tested this three times — a president's loan in 1871, a finance minister's centralisation of consular fees in the 1970s, and the price of the staple in 1979 — and got the same answer each time. **The reliable predictor of elite fracture is not how much the apex takes, but whether what it takes is taken from the ruled or from the arrangement's other members.**

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from a public-domain primary text. Article III, section 5 and Article V, section 5 of the Constitution of 1847 are quoted from the text published by the

Liberian Institute for Law and Legal Research and checked against a second transcription, as in Module 2.

Paraphrased from reference material and modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The 1871 crisis — the composition of the Republican and True Whig factions as an alliance of mostly dark-skinned upriver planters and the dark-skinned faction among the coastal merchants; the disputed term-extension referendum; the Republican election of May 1871 and the declaration of Roberts elected unopposed; the British loan; the riots of October; Roye's arrest on 28 October by a Republican mob; the executive committee of Dunbar, Sherman and Herring; the transfer of the presidency to Vice-President James Skivring Smith to preserve constitutional appearances; and Roye's death in February 1872, with the disputed account of a drowning — is drawn from reference accounts and Liberian historical summaries. The regrouping of the True Whig Party with the inclusion of the Congoes, and its return to power under Gardiner in 1878, is from a Liberian historical summary; it is the load-bearing claim of this module's second section and should be checked against Liebenow or Huberich before it is relied on further. The Grand Lodge of Liberia's founding on 22 September 1867 in the Prince Hall tradition, its confinement in practice to Americo-Liberians, and its working relationship with the True Whig Party, are from reference accounts; I have seen no membership records and the claim that lodge membership was a practical precondition of high office is stated in the literature rather than demonstrated here. J. Gus Liebenow's *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Cornell, 1969) is the standard study of this arrangement and is cited for its framing; I have not read it, and this module's account of kinship, intermarriage and the household as a patronage unit rests on the general literature rather than on his evidence. The Tubman-era figures on iron ore and revenue are as sourced in Module 6. The careers of Gabriel Baccus Matthews, Togba-Nah Tipoteh and Henry Fahnbulleh senior are from reference accounts and Liberian commentary.

Reported and contested. The account of Stephen Tolbert's redirection of consular fees, and its effect on Baccus Matthews, comes from an interview given decades later by a former Liberian information minister and published in the Liberian press; it is a single insider's recollection and is given here as such. The 1979 rice recommendation is attributed in the Liberian press to Agriculture Minister Florence Chenoweth's annual report and concerned imported rice; the government's contemporaneous position was that local rice was unaffected. The Tolbert family's rice interests are widely asserted in Liberian and scholarly commentary; I have not established the scale of their holdings and the module does not rest on a claim that the recommendation was made in order to benefit them, only that it was so read. The account of the government's use of the

Executive Mansion Guard in preference to the better-trained second battalion, and of the American mission's reaction, is from a published narrative drawing on United States military sources and is reported at second hand. The proportion of the population that was Americo-Liberian is not established by any reliable count for most of the period, for the reason given in the Landscape.

MODULE 9

During Good Behaviour, at His Pleasure

Module 9: plurality or foreclosure — a declaration of rights that reads as an inventory of what had been done to the men who signed it, one structural protection that worked exactly as designed, and the clause forty pages later that made its judgments unenforceable.

What the document actually contains

It is worth beginning by stating plainly that the Constitution of 1847 was not a thin instrument, because the temptation in a study of this order is to assume the rights were decorative and skip them.

Article I, the Declaration of Rights, runs to twenty sections. It provides for freedom of worship with no religious test for civil office; abolishes slavery and forbids any citizen or resident to deal in slaves within or without the Republic; guarantees the right to assemble, to instruct representatives and to petition for redress of grievances; guarantees remedy by due course of law without denial or delay, trial by jury, and the right to be heard in person or by counsel or both; requires grand jury presentment for capital or infamous crimes, and gives the accused a copy of the charge, confrontation of witnesses, compulsory process for his own, and a speedy public trial by a jury of the vicinity, with no compulsion to give evidence against himself and no double jeopardy; forbids deprivation of life, liberty, property or privilege except by judgment of peers or the law of the land; requires warrants on probable cause specially designating the place or person; forbids excessive bail, excessive fines, excessive punishment, laws impairing contracts and retrospective criminal laws; provides for the ballot; subordinates the military to the civil authority in exact terms and forbids a peacetime army without legislative consent; forbids taking private property without just compensation; separates the three departments; forbids taxation "under any pretext whatsoever, without the consent of the people, or their representatives in the legislature"; forbids martial law without legislative authority; asserts a right to turn public officers out of office "in order to prevent those who are vested with authority, from becoming oppressors"; and closes by providing that the writ of habeas corpus "shall be enjoyed in this Republic, in the most free, easy, cheap, expeditious and ample manner," suspendable by the legislature only on the most urgent occasions and for no more than twelve months.

Its press clause is more generous than most of its contemporaries:

> *The liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a state; it ought not, therefore, to be restrained in this republic. The printing press shall be free to every person, who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the legislature, or any branch of government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the rights thereof... In prosecutions for the publication of papers, investigating the official conduct of officers, or men in a public capacity, or where the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence. And in all indictments for libels, the jury shall have a right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court, as in other cases.*

Truth as a defence and the jury as judge of law and fact in a libel indictment: that is the Zenger settlement written into a founding charter, and it was not universal in 1847.

Where it came from, and why that matters

The authorship is disputed. Simon Greenleaf, Royall Professor of Law at Harvard and an ACS supporter, drafted the constitution of the Commonwealth of Liberia adopted on 5 January 1839, and the older literature extends his authorship to 1847. C. Patrick Burrowes has argued that this is a myth, that the convention's delegates were educated and capable enough to write the document themselves, and that the United States Constitution was not in any case its model. The dispute is unresolved and this study does not resolve it.

For the purposes of this module it does not need to be, because the text answers the framework's question about origin regardless of whose hand held the pen. Set Article I beside the grievance list in the same document's preamble, and the two are a lock and a key.

The preamble says: *We were everywhere shut out from all civil office.* Section 3 provides that no religious test whatever shall be required as a qualification for civil office or the exercise of any civil right.

The preamble says: *We were excluded from all participation in the government.* Sections 2 and 11 vest all power in the people and provide for the ballot.

The preamble says: *We were taxed without our consent.* Section 16 forbids any subsidy, charge, impost or duty to be levied under any pretext whatsoever without the consent of the people or their representatives.

The preamble says: *We were made a separate and distinct class.* Section 1 declares all men born equally free and independent.

And the disabilities the preamble does not itemise are answered clause by clause anyway. Men who had lived under registration statutes requiring free negroes to be

numbered in a clerk's book and to carry a certificate wrote section 9, forbidding any place to be searched or person seized without a warrant specially designating the place or person. Men from jurisdictions where a black man could not testify against a white one and often could not have counsel wrote sections 6 and 7. Men whose freedom had been a purchased instrument wrote section 4.

The residue here is real residue from a real factional fight, but the fight took place in another country and these men were the losing side. They had not extracted these protections by bargaining from strength; they had been denied them, item by item, and had then emigrated and written down the settlement they lost. That is a distinct route by which liberties enter a constitution and the collection should carry it: not concession wrung from an apex, but an inventory compiled by the defeated and enacted somewhere else.

Two clauses that came from the graveyard

Article V, sections 10 and 11 are not in the American models and deserve separate attention:

> *The property of which a woman may be possessed at the time of her marriage, and also that of which she may afterwards become possessed, otherwise than by her husband, shall not be held responsible for his debts; whether contracted before or after marriage. Nor shall the property thus intended to be secured to the woman be alienated otherwise than by her free and voluntary consent...*
> *In all cases in which estates are insolvent, the widow shall be entitled to one third of the real estate during her natural life, and to one third of the personal estate, which she shall hold in her own right subject to alienation by her, by devise or otherwise.*

Married women's separate property, in 1847. Mississippi had legislated in 1839 and New York would in 1848; Liberia is early, and there was no women's movement in Monrovia to demand it.

Read it against Module 1 and the origin is not mysterious. Of roughly four and a half thousand emigrants landed between 1820 and 1843, the census of 1843 found 1,819 alive. In a settlement losing three of every five adults in a generation, and losing husbands faster than wives, a rule that a wife's property is not liable for her husband's debts and cannot be alienated without her free and voluntary consent is not a concession to a faction. It is a device for preventing estates from dissolving into creditors' hands at a rate that would have emptied the colony of property as fast as it emptied it of people.

A liberty can be the residue of a demographic emergency, and where a founding population is being killed at that rate the protections it writes will be shaped by probate as much as by politics.

The one structural protection, and it worked

Now the clause that matters, and it has to be read against its twin.

Article III, section 5 — quoted in the preceding module — makes every office in the Republic revocable. The secretaries, the attorney general, the ministers and consuls hold "during the pleasure of the President." Justices of the peace, sheriffs, coroners, marshals, clerks of courts, registers and notaries hold two-year commissions "but may be removed from office within that time by the President, at his pleasure"; and all other officers not otherwise limited by law hold "during the pleasure of the President."

Article IV, section 1 makes exactly one exception:

> *The Judges of the Supreme Court, and all other Judges of Courts, shall hold their office during good behaviour; but may be removed by the President on the address of two thirds of both houses for that purpose, or by impeachment and conviction thereon. The Judges shall have salaries established by law, which may be increased, but not diminished during their continuance in office. They shall not receive any other perquisits or emoluments whatever from parties or others, on account of any duty required of them.*

The bench is the only body in the Liberian state that does not serve at the President's pleasure. Tenure during good behaviour, removal only by the President acting on a two-thirds address of both houses, a salary that may be raised and may not be lowered, and a bar on taking anything from parties.

And that protection did what a protection is supposed to do. When the legislature passed laws restricting the chiefs and bringing the chieftaincies under closer supervision by the Department of the Interior, important provisions of that legislation were at times challenged and declared unconstitutional by the Liberian Supreme Court, on the ground that the aborigines were subject to the full protection of the constitution.

Hold that for a moment against everything in the preceding eight modules. A court found, more than once, for the least powerful people in the country — people with no vote, no party, no press, no franchise qualification, and, on Module 2's showing, no clause in the constitution that mentioned them. And the ground of the finding was the correct one: that the Declaration of Rights said *all men* and *every person* and *no person*, and meant it. That is the one place in this study where the machinery did precisely what it says on its face.

And the clause that made it inert

The same country study that records the rulings records what happened to them in a single clause: *but few of these rulings were ever implemented by the government.*

The mechanism is in the constitution and it is not an accident of enforcement culture. Article III, section 1 gives the President the nomination and appointment, with the Senate's consent, of "all Judges of Courts, Sheriffs, Coroners, Marshalls, Justices of the Peace, Clerks of Courts, Registers, Notaries Public, and all other officers of State civil and military." Article IV then removes the judges from his reach. It does not remove anybody else.

So the sheriff who would serve the writ, the marshal who would execute the judgment, the clerk who would issue the process and the justice of the peace who would hear the return all held office for two years, and could be removed inside those two years by the President at his pleasure, for cause or no cause, individually and without reference to anyone.

The constitution gave the court its independence and gave the President its bailiffs.

A judgment declaring hinterland legislation unconstitutional therefore did everything a judgment can do — it was pronounced, published, and correct — and then had to be carried into the interior by a man whose livelihood depended on not carrying it. There is no need to posit corruption or cowardice on anyone's part. The arithmetic in front of the marshal was identical to the arithmetic in front of every other officeholder in Module 8, and it pointed the same way.

What was lost, and when

The franchise trajectory is the clearest measurement of foreclosure in the record, and the striking thing is that what was lost was not the majority's participation, which never existed, but the settlers' own.

In 1847 an electorate of a few hundred ratified the constitution: 272 votes were cast. That is a tiny liberty, and it was a real one. For thirty years the Republicans and True Whigs alternated, contested elections, disputed results, and in 1871 removed a president — violently and lawlessly, but they removed him, and then took care to dress the removal as constitutional succession.

After 1878 the party system closed. What replaced competition can be watched degrading in the returns.

In 1927 Charles King was returned against Thomas Faulkner of the People's Party with something like 229,527 votes to 8,992, on a register variously given as fifteen

thousand and nineteen thousand. The Guinness records list it as the most fraudulent election reported anywhere. The number is worth reading correctly: it is not the figure of a stolen election but of an abandoned one. To return a quarter of a million votes on a roll of fifteen thousand is not to cheat a count; it is to announce that no count is occurring. Faulkner stood again in 1931 after the Christy report had brought down the government, and lost. In 1935 Edwin Barclay was returned with 344,569 to King's 7,784, in the same election that carried an amendment extending the presidential term from four years to eight. From 1943 the presidency went uncontested.

In 1951 Didwho Twe was estopped from standing on a sixty-day filing rule and Tubman went to the polls unopposed. In 1955, for the first time since 1931, there was more than one presidential candidate: Tubman took 244,873 votes, 99.51 per cent, against 1,182 for Edwin Barclay's Independent True Whig Party and 16 for a third man. Barclay alleged ballot-stuffing on the ground that more votes had been cast than there were registered voters. Then came an assassination attempt on Tubman, and the Independent True Whig Party was banned and its principal backers jailed.

The foreclosure therefore has two datable phases. Between 1878 and 1927 elections among the included were converted into ceremonies. In 1955 opposition among the included was converted into treason — which is the same conversion Module 7 found being applied to Didwho Twe for writing to the United Nations, now applied to a former president of the Republic.

Whose clock the extensions ran on

Against that, the widenings, and the thing to notice about all of them is when they happened.

Citizenship was formally extended to the indigenous population under Arthur Barclay, in 1904 or 1912 depending on the source — the years in which Liberia had just lost territory to Britain and France by treaty and needed above all to demonstrate effective occupation of what remained.

The franchise was extended to citizens of the three interior provinces in 1945, on condition that they paid the hut tax. It was extended to women in 1946. Those two years are the years in which Liberia had declared war on the Axis, was hosting a large American military presence and a new airfield, had received its president-elect at the White House, and was becoming a founding member of the United Nations.

No Liberian faction demanded the interior franchise in 1945. There was no bargaining, no strike, no bloc in the legislature threatening to withhold something. What there was, was a jury.

In an order whose robe is cut for an external audience, the liberties are cut for the same audience, and they therefore arrive on that audience's calendar rather than on the domestic balance of forces. This is Module 3's finding transposed into constitutional law, and it has a specific consequence. Extensions granted this way are unusually easy to obtain and unusually shallow, because no one inside the country has staked anything on them and no faction has an interest in their enforcement afterwards. Nobody had fought for the interior vote; therefore nobody had to be satisfied by its exercise.

And the condition attached tells the rest. The interior vote required payment of the hut tax — the property qualification of 1847 restated in a currency that Module 5 showed the qualifying population had to obtain by labouring for the state's concessionaires. The extension was real. It was also a collection device.

Reading plurality against the framework

The contribution: a right is worth the tenure of the officer who executes it, not the wording of the clause that grants it.

The corpus reads liberties as residue: a faction with standing and means bargains a protection out of an apex that does not want to destroy the arrangement, and the protection outlives the quarrel that produced it. Liberia supplies three routes by which such residue can arrive, and then a failure mode the collection has not previously isolated.

The routes in are worth naming separately. **Imported residue** — the common-law criminal protections, arriving intact from settlements the drafters had no part in. **The inventory of the defeated** — a bill of rights that maps clause for clause onto the disabilities its authors had personally lived under in another country, written not by a faction bargaining from strength but by one that had lost and emigrated. And **the residue of an emergency** — married women's separate property, enacted in 1847 by a settlement burying three of every five adults.

The failure mode is the finding. The Constitution of 1847 contains exactly one office insulated from the executive, and it insulated the right one: the judiciary, during good behaviour, with an undiminishable salary. That insulation worked. The Supreme Court repeatedly held that the aborigines were entitled to the full protection of the constitution and struck down legislation accordingly, on behalf of a population that had no other instrument of any kind. And almost none of it was executed, because the same constitution left every sheriff, marshal, clerk and justice of the peace holding a two-year commission revocable by the President at his pleasure.

That yields a diagnostic more useful than asking whether a judiciary is independent, which is the question usually asked and which Liberia would pass. **Ask instead who serves the writ, and on whose sufferance he holds his office.** Judicial independence secures the *finding*; only the enforcer's tenure secures the *remedy*, and an order that grants the first while withholding the second has bought something specific and cheap: a jurisprudence that is honest, publishable, citable, and inert.

Which is worse than nothing in one precise respect, and the preceding module supplies the reason. An inert but honest jurisprudence generates a documentary record of rights vindicated — reported decisions in which the highest court of the Republic affirms that the aborigines are entitled to the full protection of the constitution — and that record is exactly what an order performing for a foreign jury most needs and least has to pay for. **Where the seam is held by an external audience, an unenforced constitutional right is not a failure of the system. It is an output of it.**

And the loss. The thing this order destroyed was not the majority's participation, which it never had, but the competition among the included, which it did. In 1847 a few hundred men ran contested elections and in 1871 removed a president. By 1927 a quarter of a million votes were being returned on a roll of fifteen thousand, and by 1955 a former president who alleged ballot-stuffing had his party banned. The framework holds that structural change comes from the hierarchy rather than from below; this module adds the corollary that **an order which forecloses competition inside its own hierarchy has abolished the only mechanism by which it could have been changed without being destroyed.** Liberia removed a president constitutionally in 1871, by mob, and then dressed it as succession. When the arrangement was removed again, in 1980, there was no form left to dress it in.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from a public-domain primary text. All quotations from the Constitution of 1847 — Article I sections 1 to 20, Article III sections 1 and 5, Article IV section 1, and Article V sections 10 and 11 — are from the literal reprint of the official text of March 1848 published in Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, at pages 852 to 864, which states that it is exact in word, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation; the obvious typographical corruptions in the digitised copy are not reproduced here. The preamble grievance list is quoted as in Module 2.

Paraphrased from modern scholarship and reference material, credited and not quoted. Simon Greenleaf's authorship of the Commonwealth constitution of 5 January 1839 is from Liberian reference accounts; the dispute over his authorship of the 1847

instrument, and C. Patrick Burrowes's argument that the delegates wrote it themselves and that the United States Constitution was not its model, is from Burrowes's papers on the delegates and on the textual sources of the constitution, which I have seen only in abstract and which should be read before this study's account of the drafting is relied on further. Robert T. Brown's 1980 article in the *Liberian Studies Journal* is the underlying treatment and I have not read it. The Supreme Court's rulings that the aborigines were subject to the full protection of the constitution, and the observation that few were implemented, are from the Library of Congress country study of Liberia; **no individual case is cited there and none has been identified here, and this is the most important outstanding verification in the module** — the reports of the Supreme Court of Liberia should be searched before the finding is carried into the framework as settled. The comparative dates for married women's property legislation in Mississippi and New York are as given in the standard reference literature.

Election figures, reported with their variances. The 272 votes cast in the constitutional referendum of 27 September 1847 are from a compilation of Liberian election results citing Richardson and Huberich. The 1927 returns are given as 229,527 to 8,992 in the figures attributed to Joseph Saye Guannu, and as approximately 230,000 or 234,000 to 9,000 elsewhere; the registered electorate is given at 15,000 and at 19,000 in different sources, and both ranges are stated rather than resolved. The Guinness listing is reported at second hand through Liberian press accounts. The 1935 and 1955 figures are from the Nohlen, Krennerich and Thibaut data handbook as reproduced in reference accounts. The banning of the Independent True Whig Party following the assassination attempt on Tubman is from the American University country study of 1984, cited at second hand.

Not established. The date of the formal extension of citizenship to the indigenous population remains given as both 1904 and 1912, as flagged in Module 4, and is not resolved here. Whether the married women's property clauses of 1847 were drafted with settler mortality in view is an inference from the demographic record and is offered as a reading, not as a documented motive; no drafting record of the convention has been consulted.

MODULE 10

Looking Beyond President Tolbert

Module 10: change and collapse — seventeen men with rifles, a crowd that was fired on and survived nothing, a treasury that could not pay its own soldiers, and a patron who had supplied the decisive violence at every crisis since 1822 and this time supplied none.

The count

At about midnight on 12 April 1980, seventeen non-commissioned officers and enlisted men of the Armed Forces of Liberia, led by a twenty-eight-year-old master sergeant named Samuel Kanyon Doe, entered the Executive Mansion in Monrovia. They killed President William Tolbert and twenty-seven of his security guard. Ten days later, on a beach beside the Barclay Training Center, thirteen senior officials of the government were stripped, tied to poles and shot before crowds. A hundred and thirty-three years of Americo-Liberian rule ended in a night.

Doe had enlisted at eighteen. He was Krahn, from Grand Gedeh in the far interior, with a few years of schooling. Every one of the seventeen was of indigenous descent.

The seed carried into this study expected 1980 to be the case that corrects the framework — the moment when the most completely excluded population in the collection produced a man from the bottom of it who took the state, against a paper whose central claim is that peasants, workers and the excluded do not change arrangements. That expectation should be tested rather than assumed, and the test has to begin with the one distinction that does the work.

A soldier is not a peasant

The framework's claim is not about social class. It is about organised violence. A durable order is an armed settlement, alterable only by those who command organised force, and the reason peasants and workers do not make structural change is that they do not command any — not that they are humble.

Doe commanded organised force. He was at the lowest rung of the hierarchy that held it, but he was on the ladder, drawing pay, holding a rank, wearing a uniform issued by the state, and standing inside the building. Seventeen armed men who are already inside the Executive Mansion are not a rising. They are a faction of the floor.

And the record supplies its own control, twelve months earlier and exactly on the point.

On 14 April 1979 the government proposed to raise the subsidised price of imported rice from twenty-two dollars to thirty dollars for a hundred-pound bag. The Progressive Alliance of Liberia called a demonstration against it. Several thousand people marched on the Executive Mansion. The government put the Executive Mansion Guard and the police in front of them rather than the better-trained battalion at the military academy, lost control of the capital within an hour, and fired: the dead are given at about seventy in some accounts and at over a hundred in others. There was looting and rioting across the city and a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

And then the government survived for another twelve months. It banned political activity, and in March 1980 it arrested Gabriel Baccus Matthews and a dozen others.

That is the framework's proposition demonstrated in the same country, in the same city, one year apart. The crowd, however angry and however numerous, met a functioning apparatus and was shot. What ended the arrangement was not the crowd. It was seventeen men who worked for it.

But the order had moved the line itself

The interesting question is therefore not whether the framework holds — it does — but why the apparatus was available to be turned, and the answer runs back through every preceding module.

In August 1822 Jehudi Ashmun surveyed his military strength and found twenty-seven sick Americans, and enrolled thirteen African youths attached to the United States Agency, most of whom had never loaded a musket. In September he recorded that those same youths, whose residence on the Cape had been regarded as the best security for their people's good behaviour, were daily deserting. The colony's floor was staffed from the surrounding population on its first day, because there was nobody else.

In February 1908 the Liberian Frontier Force was raised: five hundred men, recruited from the interior peoples, posted deliberately to garrisons outside their own districts, under a British major who arrived with Sierra Leonean recruits and mutinied over pay within twelve months. Few Americo-Liberians served in it. It was unpaid, it lived off what it took, and its work was collecting the hut tax and putting down the people it was recruited from.

By 1980 the officers were Americo-Liberian and the ranks were not.

An order that recruits its entire coercive apparatus from the population it excludes has placed the caste boundary inside its own weapon. Every other colonial case in this collection has a buffer somewhere: a settler militia, a metropolitan garrison, a corps of mercenaries with no local stake, a European officer class over locally raised troops who could be replaced from outside if they wavered. Liberia had none of these,

and Module 1 explained why it never could: it was too poor, and its fighting strength was identical with its population, and it had been renting or recruiting its violence since the month it landed.

Module 4 completes the mechanism. The Frontier Force and its successor were the one formation the Liberian state ever ran successfully at scale on interior men. It reached them at eighteen, gave them a rank, a unit, a wage and a body of officers, and did so deliberately for seven decades. A state that will not make citizens will still make soldiers, because rank is not standing and a uniform confers no claim on the country. But an armed brotherhood whose officers are drawn from a caste its members can never enter has been given, along with its rifles, an unusually clear account of who its people are and who they are not.

The cracks, taken one at a time

Elite Chaos names four ways a floor breaks. Three of them are present here in textbook form and the fourth is not, and the fourth is where this case adds something.

Fracture. Present, and thoroughly. Module 8 traced the counter-elite: Matthews, a dismissed foreign service officer; Tipoteh, an economist with a doctorate; Fahnbulleh, an ambassador who had been jailed — men whom Tubman's schools and Tubman's unification had made and whom the arrangement's summit could not seat. This is exactly the elite overproduction the paper describes, and the surplus behaved exactly as the paper predicts: it organised the crowd. The rice demonstration of April 1979 was called by the Progressive Alliance, not by the market women. And Tolbert widened the fracture himself, first by recognising opposition parties and then by arresting their leaders in March 1980 — legitimating the counter-elite and then closing the only channel through which its grievance could be pursued.

Exhaustion. Present, and fiscal. Iron ore had been more than half of export earnings; the market turned in the middle of the decade and never recovered its old level; LAMCO's reserves were running down; the oil shock of 1979 raised the cost of everything imported, including the rice. The rice increase itself was a fiscal decision by a government trying to stop paying a subsidy. And the tell is what the soldiers did on taking power: within days the People's Redemption Council imposed a price freeze on all commodities including imported food, and **doubled the salaries of civil servants and military personnel.** Men who double their own pay on the first morning are telling you what the grievance was, and the Frontier Force's arrears had been a standing feature of the institution since 1909.

Overbreeding. Present, and it is Module 8's finding restated in the paper's vocabulary: an order that seats fewer claimants than it produces. Tubman's schools worked. That was the problem.

Conquest. Absent. No rival elite defeated Liberia's floor and imposed a settlement at bayonet point.

The crack the paper does not name

And here the case does correct the framework, though not in the direction the seed expected.

Module 1 established that the founding floor was borrowed and never billed: a Malinke king's threat to take his neighbours' heads off, a United States sloop-of-war on an anti-slaving patrol, a British officer passing on his way to Cape Coast, and a Liverpool trader's private stores. Module 6 established that by 1926 the Frontier Force had been written into a New York loan agreement as collateral — *for the further security of the revenues and receipts* — with a strength that could not be increased or reduced without the agreement of an American Financial Adviser.

And when the arrangement was seriously threatened, the lender turned up. In 1915, when the Kru rose over the hut tax and forced recruitment and raised the Union Jack, President Wilson sent the cruiser *Chester* with five hundred rifles and a quarter of a million rounds; American officers commanded the suppression; the Secretary of State read the despatch on the crushing of the revolt "with gratification." In 1930, when the League's report brought the government down, the United States pressed but did not permit the international commission of control that Britain wanted.

In 1980, nothing came. And on the American record it was not inattention: a White House Situation Room memorandum of 29 September 1979 — seven months before the coup — is titled "Looking beyond President Tolbert."

So the fourth crack in this case is not conquest. It is the withdrawal of a floor that had always been borrowed. Nobody defeated Liberia. The party that had supplied the decisive violence at every crisis since 1822 declined to supply it again, and the declining was sufficient.

That is a distinct mode and it deserves its own name in the paper, because it behaves differently from the other three. Fracture, exhaustion and conquest all leave archives: a split faction leaves manifestos, an exhausted treasury leaves accounts, a conquest leaves an army. **The withdrawal of a lent floor leaves nothing, because what has happened is that something did not happen.** There is no despatch ordering non-intervention, no debate, no decision anyone has to defend. There is a memorandum with a title. And the domestic record of such a collapse will therefore show a state

falling to a force that was obviously too small to take it, with no visible explanation — which is precisely how the Liberian coup reads to anyone who counts the seventeen men and stops there.

The morning after

Elite Chaos predicts that the morning after a revolution made in the people's name discloses a new elite in the seats of the old one, because it was a counter-elite that made it. Liberia's morning after took about five days.

Executive authority went to the People's Redemption Council, assisted by a cabinet of seventeen of whom eleven were civilians. Gabriel Baccus Matthews — arrested the previous month — became foreign minister. Togba-Nah Tipoteh took planning and economic development. Boima Fahnbulleh took education. Chea Cheapoo took justice. Three members of the Tolbert government were retained. The men the arrangement had formed and could not seat were in office within a week of the soldiers taking the building, and they had not fired a shot.

The rest followed the pattern too. Doe suspended the constitution and banned political parties. He pledged that private property would be respected and reassured foreign-owned businesses that commitments previously made to them would be honoured — which is to say the concessions of Module 6 survived the revolution intact. And within a few years his government had filled with Krahn from Grand Gedeh, and the counter-elite ministers were gone. A new constitution came in 1984; Doe won an election in 1985 that observers called fraudulent; the first civil war began in 1989 and he was killed in 1990.

The boundary was not abolished. It was redrawn, with different people inside it.

Reading change against the framework

The first contribution: a borrowed floor does not have to be defeated. It has only to be not lent — and this is a distinct mode of collapse whose signature is an absence, and which is therefore invisible in the domestic archive.

Elite Chaos names conquest by a rival elite: an outside apex defeats the local floor and imposes a new order at bayonet point. Liberia supplies the mirror image and it should be entered as a fifth crack, or as the second face of the third. An order whose coercive capacity has been supplied from outside — by a patron, a garrison, a subsidy, a guarantee — falls when the supplier stops, and the supplier does not need to change sides or do anything at all. It needs only to be busy elsewhere.

The diagnostic follows from Module 1 and is testable across the collection: **an order that never paid for its own floor will collapse at the moment the lender's calculation changes, and the collapse will look, from inside, disproportionate to the force applied.** Seventeen men should not be able to take a country. They can take a country whose apparatus is unpaid, whose treasury is empty, and whose guarantor has already circulated a memorandum about what comes next.

The second contribution, which is the answer to the seed's expectation: the framework's line runs between the armed and the unarmed, not between the elite and the common man — and an order that recruits its whole apparatus from the population it excludes has moved that line without noticing.

The seed thought 1980 might be the exception that corrects the paper. It is not an exception; it is the paper's own claim arriving precisely where the paper says to look, which is wherever the organised violence is. The rice rioters were the excluded and they were shot and the government survived a year. The counter-elite had degrees and a movement and were in prison in March 1980. The men who ended the arrangement were the only men in the country who commanded organised force.

What Liberia adds is the reason the composition of that force was so dangerous. For seventy-two years the order had deliberately manufactured a body of men who were **inside the apparatus and outside the boundary** — which is the one category a caste-based settlement of the kind Module 8 described cannot afford to create, because such a man has the means of the hierarchy and the grievance of the ruled, and nothing in the arrangement is holding him. Every other case in the collection dilutes this category with settler militias, foreign garrisons or mercenaries. Liberia could never afford to, and so it concentrated it.

The third, and the one that most needs saying against the dignifying myth. The Liberian version of the flattering story is that in April 1980 the people rose and the settler republic fell — and market women did sing in the streets, and for the majority the seizure of power carried a genuine charge of liberation, and none of that should be waved away. But the arithmetic is not the story. The crowd rioted in April 1979 and was fired on and achieved nothing structural; the coup came from inside the apparatus; the counter-elite was installed by the soldiers rather than the reverse; the concessions were reaffirmed within days; the executions were of a caste rather than of an arrangement; and the boundary was rebuilt within a few years on ethnic rather than settler lines.

The honest reading is the paper's own reading of the weight on the lever. The rice riot did not break the floor. It made the cost of the arrangement so legible that when the floor did crack — from the arrears, the fiscal collapse, the fracture and the patron's

silence — there was nobody left who thought it worth holding up. **What changed in April 1980 was a caste's tenure. What survived was the floor, the settlement, the extraction and the default**, all four of which the People's Redemption Council took over and used, which is why the decade that followed is a continuation of this study rather than an epilogue to it.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. Ashmun's survey of the colony's military strength and the enrolment of the thirteen African youths, and his note on their desertion, are from his *History of the American Colony in Liberia* (1826), checked against the page images as in Module 1. The Secretary of State's acknowledgement of the crushing of the Kru revolt "with gratification" is from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916*. Article XII, paragraph 3 of the loan agreement of 1 September 1926, requiring the maintenance of the Frontier Force for the further security of the revenues and receipts, is as quoted and sourced in Module 6.

Reported at second hand, with the chain named. The White House Situation Room memorandum of 29 September 1979 entitled "Looking beyond President Tolbert" is cited in a published article by Niels Hahn on United States operations in Liberia, which in turn cites D. Elwood Dunn's *Limits of Reciprocity* at page 103. **I have not seen the memorandum or Dunn's reproduction of it, and the title is used here as reported.** It is the module's title and one of its load-bearing pieces of evidence, and it should be verified against Dunn, and if possible against the declassified record, before this module is published in any final form. Nothing in the module's argument depends on the memorandum's contents, only on its date and title, and the wider point — that no American force or materiel was sent in April 1980, in contrast to 1915 — is not in dispute.

Paraphrased from reference material and modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The composition and conduct of the coup — seventeen non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, Doe's age, rank, Krahn origin and county, the killing of Tolbert and twenty-seven of the guard, the suspension of the constitution, the banning of parties, the release of political prisoners, and the reassurance to foreign business — is from the Library of Congress country study of Liberia and from standard reference accounts. The composition of the post-coup cabinet, seventeen members of whom eleven were civilians, with Matthews at foreign affairs, Tipoteh at planning and economic development, Fahnbulleh at education and Cheapoo at justice, is from the same country study. The price freeze and the doubling of civil service and military salaries are from a standard biographical reference. The rice increase from twenty-two

to thirty dollars per hundred-pound bag, the organisation of the demonstration by the Progressive Alliance of Liberia, the government's use of the Executive Mansion Guard in preference to the better-trained battalion, and the loss of control within an hour are as sourced in Module 8, drawing on a published narrative using United States military sources. The arrest of Matthews and a dozen others in March 1980 is from reference accounts. The executions of 22 April 1980 are reported in the contemporaneous American press.

Contested figures and unresolved points. The death toll of the rice riots of 14 April 1979 is given at about seventy in some accounts and at over a hundred in others, and no authoritative count has been established here. The number of coup participants is uniformly given as seventeen; the size of the People's Redemption Council is given as seventeen in some sources and as fifteen in others, and both are reported. Whether pay arrears were an operative grievance among the coup participants is inferred here from the Force's long history of non-payment and from the PRC's immediate doubling of military salaries; I have found no direct testimony from the participants and the inference is stated as one. Liberian iron ore price and export series for the 1970s are described qualitatively rather than given, since the figures cited in the secondary literature have not been traced to a primary series.

MODULE 11

Twenty-Seven Bodies, and the Seed Rice

Module 11: the grim accounting — a sword ledger that cannot be totalled because nobody counted, a metabolic note of a kind the framework has not yet named, and a forgetting that was never completed because the people it had to convince were never formed.

The problem with the columns

Most orders in this collection can be totalled, at least to an order of magnitude. Somebody counted: a chronicler, a tax assessor, a census, a colonial statistician, a commission. Liberia produced almost no count of its own violence for a hundred and fifty-seven years, and the shape of that absence is the first entry in the ledger rather than an obstacle to compiling it.

The settlers counted their own dead by name. Ashmun's return of the morning of 11 November 1822 lists fifteen people — Joseph Benson shot dead, Mary Tines stabbed in her house, Thomas Spinn mortally injured by five wounds, Ann Hawkins with thirteen wounds, two small children of Minty Draper missing, five of James Benson's missing, the eldest thirteen. The census of September 1843 established that of some four and a half thousand emigrants landed since 1820, 1,819 were alive.

For the people on the other side of the same events there is this, from the colonial journal entry of 15 November 1822, which Ashmun reproduces:

> *It never has been possible to ascertain the number of the enemy killed or disabled on this occasion... But two days ago, twenty-seven bodies were discovered by a party of friendly Condoes employed by the Agent for the purpose. On entering the wood, the offensive effluvium from putrid bodies, is at this time intolerable.*

Twenty-seven, found by a search party, explicitly not a total, in an action Ashmun described elsewhere as a gun of great power firing into a solid mass of human flesh at thirty to sixty yards.

That asymmetry holds for the whole life of the order, and Module 3 explains it. A population enumerated in the census, deeded, enfranchised and named in the founding document is a population whose deaths get written down. A population that appears in the Declaration once, as a witness, is not enumerated at all — and **a people not counted in the census is not counted in the casualty return either.**

The sword, period by period, with the gaps left open

The founding, 1822. Two assaults on Cape Mesurado. Settler losses: two dead, two mortally wounded, four wounded and seven children carried off on 11 November; three gunners wounded, one mortally, on 1 December. Attacking losses: never established; twenty-seven bodies recovered; Ashmun's own estimate of eight hundred men in the mass that was raked, with no count of what the raking did.

The coastal expansion, 1847–1908. Repeated campaigns against the Grebo, the Kru, the Gola and the Bassa as the Republic pushed along the coast and a short way inland, punctuated by treaties of cession. **Figures not established.** The surviving record is presidential messages, treaty texts, occasional American naval reports, and the odd consular despatch.

The Frontier Force, 1908–1944. Here the record improves, and only because foreigners were present to write it down. The Kru war of 1915–16: rebel forces decimated under American officers, ringleaders captured and hanged, the coast devastated and many exiled. The allegation, in a letter from the chief the sources call Juah Nimene to Lord Cecil at the League, that seventy-five chiefs invited to a peace conference at Sinoe in 1916 were seized and executed — reported here as an allegation on a chain not verified to its source. The Sasstown operations of 1931–32: burned towns, and a report of the charred remains of six children found in one village after the troops had gone. And underneath the named episodes, the routine described in the country study — villages raided, livestock taken, men rounded up for roads and porterage, women abducted, taxes collected several times a year according to the requirements of the troops. **Figures not established for any of it.**

The Fernando Pó traffic, c.1905–1930. The League's commission found that as recently as 1928 government officials and Frontier Force soldiers had been raiding and forcibly recruiting native boys for shipment to the island, with recruiting agents including the President's brother paid per head, and an arrangement reported for some three thousand boys. Mortality on the island: **not established here.**

Pawning and domestic slavery. Found by the same commission to exist and to amount to a form of slavery, with children of five and six pawned in perpetuity to pay taxes. **Numbers not established.**

Forced labour. Roads, government farms and porterage, running from the reorganisation of the interior after 1904 to the middle of the century, and forced recruitment for the plantations continuing at least to 1954. **Deaths not established.**

The end, 1979–80. The rice riots of 14 April 1979: accounts give dozens killed and five hundred wounded, about seventy killed, and over a hundred killed. The coup of 12

April 1980: President Tolbert and twenty-seven of his guard. The tribunal of 22 April: thirteen officials shot on the beach.

The total for a hundred and fifty-eight years cannot be given, and the reason is not that the deaths were few.

The order's own dead

There is a second column here that most cases in this collection do not have, and it should be entered because the framework's question is what the arrangement cost, not what it cost its victims.

Of roughly four and a half thousand emigrants landed between 1820 and 1843, the census of 1843 found 1,819 alive: something over two and a half thousand dead in twenty-three years out of a founding population of that size, in what the demographic reconstruction calls the highest mortality recorded for any settlement under modern record-keeping. The emigration continued: something like sixteen thousand recorded arrivals from America by 1904, with five to six thousand recaptives landed alongside them. The deaths across the whole of it have not been totalled here, but the ratio of the first generation is the shape of the thing.

That is not the sword. It was *Plasmodium falciparum*, against which the people they had come to govern carried an acquired immunity they did not. But it is the entry that most distinguishes this case, and it distinguishes it in a direction the collection's other conquests do not run. In most of them the conquerors' losses are trivial beside the conquered's, and both are recorded by the conquerors. Here the conquerors' losses were catastrophic, were counted precisely, were published in America to raise money, and are known to the individual. The conquered's losses were larger over the whole period, almost certainly, and are not known at all.

The metabolic ledger, and whether it applies

The classic test is whether advanced coordination and intensive agriculture had lifted the population above the land's unassisted carrying capacity, so that a conquest or a collapse calls the note in famine and disease.

On the classic test, no. The economy the settlers found was shifting cultivation of upland rice, with no state-organised irrigation, no imperial granary and no redistributive apparatus to break. There was nothing of the kind that made the fall of Tawantinsuyu or the disruption of a hydraulic system lethal. Whatever the settlers did to the interior, they did not break a food machine, because there was no food machine to break.

But the note exists here in a second form, and this order built it.

By 1979 Liberia was importing about a quarter of the rice it ate. By 2021 it consumed some 809,000 tonnes and grew about 174,000 — twenty-one per cent. Rice supplies, on United Nations estimates, something in the order of eighty-five per cent of the calories consumed in the country. A government agricultural researcher put the puzzle plainly in his own office outside Monrovia: the country has good land and good rainfall, and imports most of its staple.

The mechanism is in Modules 5 and 6 and does not need to be inferred. The Northwestern economic survey found that concession revenue built arterial roads; that the elite took the land beside those roads for their own rubber farms, pushing smallholder rice cultivation further back into the bush; and that the roads brought officials within reach of populations for labour recruitment and unofficial tax collection. Module 5 supplies the rest: a cash tax on a population with almost no cash, whose four available routes to cash were road labour, the plantations, Fernando Pó, or pawning a person. Every one of those routes took a man off a rice farm.

So the coordination that lifted the Liberian population above what its own fields were feeding it was not agricultural. It was commercial: iron ore and rubber exports buying imported calories. That is a metabolic debt in the framework's sense — a population sustained above the unassisted carrying capacity of its land by an arrangement that has to keep running — and it behaves exactly like the classic one. It was called twice.

The first call was April 1979, and the shape of it is diagnostic. The state proposed to raise the price of the import, and the capital rioted: an urban population that could not eat unless a foreign crop arrived at a price the government set. That is a metabolic dependency presenting as a political crisis, and it is why the rice riot was not merely a protest about a commodity.

The second call came with the war. In 1990 no crops were sown across much of the country, and people facing starvation ate the seed rice that soldiers had not confiscated or burned. At Tubmanburg in Bomi County in 1996, a military blockade killed some four thousand people by starvation and disease, on the assessment of the United Nations food agency's mission — a single town, forty-five miles from the capital. The export economy that had paid for the food was destroyed at the same moment as the farming that might have replaced it.

And the detail that makes this a distinct species rather than a variant is the seed rice. When a hydraulic system is broken, the fields are still there and so is the knowledge; the note is called once and can be paid down by restoring the coordination. When an import chain is broken after two generations, the seed stock has been out of

cultivation, the varieties have been lost, and the people who knew the planting calendar are old. **The commercial metabolic note compounds, because the alternative it displaced decays while it is not being used.** Liberia was importing two-thirds of its rice thirty years after the riot and four-fifths of it forty years after, in a country its own agronomists describe as well watered and well soiled.

Whether the wars belong in this column

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's estimate for the conflicts of 1989 to 2003 is about two hundred and fifty thousand dead. The question this module has to answer honestly is whether that figure belongs to the arrangement that ended in April 1980, and the answer is that it does not, and that the conditions it ran through do.

Against charging it here: fourteen years and two wars separate the coup from the peace. Samuel Doe built his own order, filled it with Krahn from Grand Gedeh, and made his own enemies; the Nimba raids of 1985 that turned the Gio and Mano against him were his doing. Charles Taylor's war was a bid for power, not a rising against settlers. Most of the killing was done by indigenous Liberians to indigenous Liberians, in factions the settler republic had never heard of.

For noting the inheritance: the boundary the war ran along had been drawn by the settlement of 1847 and merely redrawn after 1980. The army that fought the first phase was the one Module 4 showed the Republic building, deliberately, out of the population it excluded. The food system that failed was the one Module 6 built. And what every faction was fighting over — the iron, the rubber, the timber, the registry — was the concession structure the arrangement had created and that Doe had reaffirmed within days of taking power.

The correct entry is therefore two lines rather than one. **The deaths of 1989–2003 are not the settler order's to be charged with. The conditions in which they occurred are.** The framework's business here is arithmetic, and it should refuse the satisfaction of collapsing a hundred and thirty-three years and a fourteen-year war into a single number, which would be an attribution of guilt across generations dressed as a count.

The forgetting, and why it never took

The framework's third question is how, when enough time passes, people come to forget that violence made the arrangement. Liberia did the ordinary work and it did it well.

The seal adopted in 1847 records an arrival: a ship under sail, a rising sun, a plough and spade brought ashore, and the motto in the first person plural. The Declaration describes the country as acquired "by honourable purchase from the natives." Within seven months of writing that, Hilary Teage was describing the previous generation's task as driving "the invading native from our door." And from 1916 to 1980 the first of December was a national holiday named for a woman who is said to have lit a cannon with a coal from her pipe — a story which, as Module 1 set out, does not hide the killing but removes the Malinke king, the American sloop, the British schooner and the Liverpool trader, and puts a settler alone at the gun.

There is no monument to the interior wars, no commemoration, and no count.

And yet the forgetting was never completed, and on the evidence of Module 4 it could not have been.

A conqueror's account becomes the furniture of reality when it has been installed in children before they could weigh it — which requires forming them. This order withheld formation from ninety-odd per cent of the people it governed for ninety-seven years, and the formation that was already running held the field: Poro and Sande, taking every child in most of the territory at twelve, conferring a personhood and a citizenship the Republic did not grant, from authorities the Republic did not appoint. There was never any prospect that the settler account would settle into "just the way the world is" for the people it was done to, because the settler account was never put into them.

The proof is the speed of the reversal. Matilda Newport Day was abolished in 1980, in the year of the coup, by men who understood exactly what it had been for. The motto and the seal went to a presidential commission of fifty-one members in 1974, to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2009, and to the Senate again in 2022, and have not been changed. And in 2011 a serving senator from Nimba County stated the interior's version of a hundred and eighty-nine years in five words: they didn't bring us, they met us here.

One more measurement belongs here. When Liberia finally constituted a formal reckoning with its own violence, the peace agreement gave the Truth and Reconciliation Commission a temporal mandate running from January 1979 to October 2003. The commission was charged with examining root causes and its report does discuss the settler order at length; but the twenty thousand statements it took, the violations it catalogued and the numbers it produced cover twenty-four years out of a hundred and eighty-one. That is not a criticism of the commission, which did the work it was given. It is a measurement of what a settlement of this kind leaves behind: **a**

ledger that cannot be totalled, and a mandate that begins after the period in which most of it accrued.

Reading the accounting against the framework

The first contribution: the metabolic debt has a second and modern species, in which the coordination that lifts a population above its land's carrying capacity is not agricultural but commercial — export earnings buying imported calories — and it compounds in a way the classic form does not.

The framework's account of the metabolic note assumes the coordination is productive: irrigation, terracing, imperial granaries, a food system that a conquest disrupts. Liberia never had one and still incurred the debt, because the extraction described in Module 6 pulled labour off the land, took the best ground for rubber, and paid for the resulting shortfall out of ore. A population fed that way is exactly as far above its unassisted carrying capacity as one fed by a hydraulic system, and just as exposed.

It is more exposed in one specific respect, and the signature is the seed rice. A broken irrigation system leaves the fields, the seed and the knowledge intact; the note is called once. A broken import chain, after two generations of dependence, finds the seed stock out of cultivation, the varieties lost and the growers old — so the note is called and cannot be paid down, and the dependency deepens after the crisis rather than resolving. **The diagnostic is the ratio of staple consumed to staple grown, and the tell that the debt has compounded is that the ratio worsens after the collapse.** Liberia imported a quarter of its rice in 1979 and four-fifths of it forty years later.

The second contribution: the forgetting requires formation, and an order that withholds formation forfeits the forgetting permanently — which is the hidden price of the cheapest arrangement available to it.

Module 4 established that the Republic withheld formation from the majority because forming them would have carried a land claim, and Module 8 established that its default ran on a boundary rather than on offices because it could afford nothing else. This module supplies what those two choices cost on the far end. The violence never became invisible, because invisibility is manufactured in childhood and the order was never in the children's rooms. So the arrangement could never stop being an arrangement and become simply the world. It had to be held, continuously, by force it could not pay for, against a population that had a competing account of who they were and where the settlers came from — which is why an order this cheap to run was simultaneously so expensive, and why its own founding holiday could be struck out of the calendar in a single year with nobody defending it.

The third, and it is a methodological one the collection should adopt. The grim accounting for an order that withheld formation is *structurally* uncountable, and the absence should be entered as a finding rather than apologised for as a gap. The mechanism is direct: an order that will not admit a population does not enumerate it, and an unenumerated population generates no casualty returns, no coroners' records, no parish registers and no compensation claims. This study can state to the individual how many settlers died in the first generation and cannot state within an order of magnitude how many of the people they governed were killed by the Frontier Force in seventy years. That disparity is not an accident of archival survival. **It is the same clause operating at both ends: the population the Constitution did not mention is the population the state did not count, alive or dead.**

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from a public-domain primary text. The colonial journal entry of 15 November 1822 on the twenty-seven bodies, and the casualty return of 11 November, are from Ashmun's *History of the American Colony in Liberia* (1826), pages 29 and 30, checked against page images as in Module 1.

Paraphrased from reference material, scholarship and international reports, credited and not quoted. The 1843 census figure of 1,819 survivors and the demographic reconstruction of settler mortality are from Antonio McDaniel's work, as sourced in Module 1. The Kru war of 1915–16 and the Sasstown operations of 1931–32 are as sourced in Module 5, including the flagged and unverified allegations concerning Sinoe in 1916 and the children at New Sasstown. The League commission's findings on Fernando Pó recruitment, pawning and forced labour are as sourced in Modules 4 and 7. The Northwestern survey's finding on concession roads displacing smallholder rice is as sourced in Module 6. The 1996 famine at Tubmanburg, with some four thousand deaths from starvation and disease under military blockade, is from the FAO/GIEWS special report on Liberia of December 1996. The observation that no crops were sown in many areas in 1990 and that people ate the seed rice soldiers had not confiscated or burned is from a *Cultural Survival Quarterly* article on Liberian agricultural knowledge. Liberian rice consumption and production figures — about a quarter imported in 1979, 809,000 tonnes consumed against 174,000 grown in 2021, rice at about eighty-five per cent of calories on United Nations estimates and at nearly half of adult calorie intake on a World Bank figure — are from an AfricaRice release, a *Yale Globalist* report and the country literature; the two calorie figures are not reconciled here and both are given. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate period of January 1979 to October 2003, its twenty thousand statements, and the estimate of

about 250,000 dead are from Human Rights Watch, the Human Rights Data Analysis Group and standard reference accounts; **I have not read the TRC report and its treatment of the pre-1979 period is described here at second hand.**

Contested figures and figures not established. The 1979 rice price increase is given as from $22 to $26 in one account and from $22 to $30 in another, and the death toll at the riots as dozens, about seventy, and over a hundred, with five hundred wounded in one report; all are stated rather than resolved. The crowd is given at several thousand and at more than twelve thousand. Casualty figures for the coastal wars of 1847–1908, for Frontier Force operations across seventy years, for mortality among Liberian labourers on Fernando Pó, and for deaths under forced labour and porterage are **not established** by any source consulted, and no estimate is offered. The number of recaptives landed is given at over five thousand and at about six thousand, and total American emigration at fifteen to nineteen thousand; the ranges stand. The figure of three thousand boys in the Fernando Pó arrangement is as reported in the commission's findings at second hand.

MODULE 12

Some Time With Me in Nigeria

Module 12: convergence and divergence — the whole European colonial instrument set, assembled independently on the Grain Coast by people one generation out of slavery, with no metropole, no manual and no European in the room; what that proves; and the strongest case for the thing, stated at full strength and answered.

The sentence in the Lords

On 25 April 1934, in the House of Lords, Frederick Lugard rose to describe the League of Nations commission that had investigated Liberia four years earlier, and vouched for its chairman:

> *the third, Dr. Christy, the nominee of the League, was a man of sound judgment with exceptionally wide experience in many parts of Africa, including some time with me in Nigeria.*

Some time with me in Nigeria. The man giving evidence on Liberian misgovernment to the British Parliament is the man who conquered the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, who in his annual report for 1902 counted the seventeen conquests of Hausaland that preceded his own and concluded that he could see no injustice in taking the suzerainty by the same right, and who then built the model of indirect rule that every British administration in Africa copied. He is speaking in a chamber which had never inquired into the hut tax in Northern Nigeria, the forced labour on Northern Nigerian roads, or the slavery Lugard's own settlement left standing in the emirates for a generation after 1903.

He was not being hypocritical, exactly. He was doing what an expert does, which is to recognise the machinery. And he recognised it because it was his own.

What Monrovia built without a manual

Set out the Liberian order's working parts and check each against the European colonial toolkit.

Indirect rule through appointed chiefs. The Barclay reorganisation after 1904 divided the interior into districts under commissioners answerable to a Department of

the Interior, converted rulers into paramount chiefs within a provincial hierarchy, and made them appointable and removable.

A hut tax, payable in cash. Assessed by hut, collected through the chiefs, who retained a commission. Liberia's own subjects had almost no cash, which — as in Natal in 1849, Nyasaland in 1891, Sierra Leone in 1896, Kenya, and Southern Rhodesia — was the mechanism rather than the flaw. A cash demand on a cashless population is a labour draft with a receipt.

A frontier force recruited from the ruled. Five hundred men in 1908, drawn from the interior peoples, posted deliberately to garrisons outside their own districts, commanded initially by a British major with Sierra Leonean recruits, unpaid, and used to collect the tax and suppress resistance to the labour draft.

Forced labour for public works. Roads, government farms, and porterage, exacted through the commissioners and the chiefs.

Dual land tenure. Fee simple for the included; collective, inalienable "aborigines" title vested in chiefs and elders as trustees for everyone else, convertible to fee simple only on the government's finding that a tribe had become sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilisation.

A civilising standard as the condition of admission. Not a race bar — Module 2 established that the constitution's only racial exclusion ran against white men — but an assessment made by the party that benefited from a negative answer, which is the deferral clause the collection has found in every European colonial robe.

Formation withheld from the majority. A centralised school system in 1912 covering five coastal counties; mission schools for everything else; the state's own historians noting that any school it built would have had to contend with Poro and Sande.

A concession economy. A million acres for ninety-nine years at six cents an acre, with the government covenanting to encourage, support and assist the lessee's labour supply.

There is nothing on that list that Lugard, or Lyautey, or the Governor of Kenya, or the Portuguese in Angola would not have recognised at once. And there was no European in the room when it was built.

The Republic of Liberia had no metropole, no colonial office, no governor, no seconded administrators from an imperial service, and a constitution which provided that none but persons of colour should be admitted to citizenship and that no non-citizen might hold real estate. Its legislators were the sons and grandsons of people who had been chattel property in Virginia and Maryland. They did not read the *Dual Mandate*; Lugard published it in 1922, fourteen years after the Frontier Force was

raised and eighteen after the Barclay Plan. They arrived at the whole apparatus themselves.

That is the strongest demonstration in this collection that the colonial instrument set is positional. It is not a European technology and it is not a white one. It is what a small, poor, armed group does when it holds a coast, claims an interior it cannot occupy, needs revenue it cannot raise, and faces a population it will not admit — and the proof is that the people on whom the instrument set had been used built it again, faithfully, from scratch, without being taught.

Position logic at scale looks exactly like conspiracy from the outside and is nothing of the kind from the inside. Liberia is the case that removes the last available alternative explanation, because there is nobody to have conspired with.

Where Liberia sits on the corpus's table

The collection has established a variable and a thing that overrides it, and Liberia tests both.

The complexity variable holds. Where a conqueror finds an apparatus worth keeping, he keeps it: Britain kept the emir, the alkali court and the Maliki law in Northern Nigeria and ran the country on one political officer per hundred thousand people; Britain ruled Buganda through the Katikkiro. Where there is no apparatus, chiefs are forged: Kenya's Kikuyu had no chiefs and Britain made some, and got the *kipande* at two million throats and an Emergency at the end of it.

Liberia found what the Landscape described: confederacies of quasi-autonomous chiefdoms, land held as a relation rather than a thing, and authority running through lineage, elders and Poro — which crosses the very boundaries a stranger would want to use as a map. There was no throne to sit in. And the Republic behaved exactly as the variable predicts for that case: it forged paramount chiefs, it built a frontier force rather than inheriting an army, and it never developed a cheap hold. It got Kenya's outcome, not Sokoto's, for Kenya's reason.

The overriding variable is settlers, and here Liberia diverges in a way the corpus should record. The rule the collection derived is that where a metropole has a settler constituency, the settlers win, the extraction turns from flow to stock, and the native becomes an obstacle rather than a labour supply. Liberia was a settler order and did not take the stock. Article V, section 14 voided any purchase of land by a citizen from the aborigines; the interior was never opened to settler farms on the Kenyan model; and the extraction stayed a flow extraction — tax and labour — for a hundred and four years.

The reason is demographic and it is the third appearance in this collection of the same insect.

The Americo-Liberian population never exceeded a small percentage of the country, and the reason is in Module 1: of some four and a half thousand emigrants landed between 1820 and 1843, the census of 1843 found 1,819 alive. *Plasmodium falciparum*, carried by *Anopheles*, killed the settlers at a rate that has no parallel in the modern record — and it did so continuously, for decades, against a population that was itself the entire fighting strength of the order. A settler community that cannot keep three of five of its arrivals alive cannot generate a frontier. It can hold coastal towns and it can claim an interior, and that is what it did.

So: in Saint-Domingue the mosquito destroyed Napoleon's army of reconquest and bought Haiti its independence. In Northern Nigeria it prevented European settlement altogether and thereby produced the gentlest and most durable order in the collection. In Liberia it produced a third outcome — **a settler order permanently too small to settle** — which is why Liberia has settler colonialism's politics with none of its land-taking, and why the stock, when it was finally taken in 1926, went not to settlers but to a foreign corporation in a single instrument.

The corpus should hold that as a refinement: **the settler override is a function of settler numbers, and settler numbers are a function of the disease environment. Where a settler population exists but cannot grow, the order retains the caste politics of settlement and the extraction pattern of indirect rule** — and the combination is unstable, because the caste politics require an exclusion that the extraction pattern cannot afford to enforce.

What the case returns to the framework

Eleven modules produced eleven contributions and they are not repeated here at length, but four of them are general rather than local and belong in the collection's working stock.

The floor can be rented and never billed, and a rented floor does not have to be defeated — only not lent. The 1822 settlement's decisive violence was supplied three times by parties who were never paid: a Malinke king placing a trading counterparty, an American sloop on an anti-slaving patrol, a British officer sailing to Cape Coast. In 1926 the arrangement was formalised, and the Frontier Force appears in a New York loan agreement as collateral — *for the further security of the revenues and receipts* — with a strength that could not be altered without an American official's agreement. In 1915 the lender turned up with a cruiser and a quarter of a million rounds. In 1980 it did not. *Elite Chaos* names conquest by a rival elite as the third crack; Liberia supplies its mirror, and the mirror leaves no archive, because what happened is that something did not happen.

Exclusion does not require an exclusion clause. The Constitution of 1847 barred white men by name and never mentioned the ninety-odd per cent it actually governed. The bar was the phrase *possessing real estate* in the franchise clause, working against a tenure that the same document had placed beyond private conversion. That form is more durable than a race bar because it names nobody, is genuinely open in principle, and converts a demand for repeal into an application for certification — an administrative queue rather than a political act.

Formation is withheld from those whose admission would carry a claim, not from those who are culturally distant — and the proof is that the same order formed five or six thousand recaptured Africans so completely that their name became the name of its ruling caste, while leaving the Kpelle ninety miles inland to Poro for ninety-seven years. Which reverses the expected order of operations: the land settlement sets the formation policy, so a conquest's tenure law predicts whose children it will educate.

And a right is worth the tenure of the officer who executes it. Article IV made Liberian judges unremovable during good behaviour with undiminishable salaries — the only office in the state not held at the President's pleasure — and they used it, striking down hinterland legislation on the ground that the aborigines were entitled to the full protection of the constitution. Article III left every sheriff, marshal and clerk of court removable at pleasure. Few of the rulings were executed. The diagnostic that follows is not whether a judiciary is independent but who serves the writ and on whose sufferance.

The recursion, closed

The collection's founding premise is that a conqueror never meets an aboriginal baseline, and Liberia can be laid out end to end as a demonstration.

What the settlers found in 1822 was a former conquest: the Mane and Mande movements out of the savanna, and with them or amplified by them the Poro and Sande societies, which a Dutch geographer had described in print in 1668 from an account of about 1628. By 1822 nobody on that coast experienced initiation as a policy. It was what growing up consisted of.

Over that the settlers laid an order which never reached the self-running pole at all, because it withheld the formation that would have taken it there. It ran on force it could not pay for, borrowed from whoever would lend, for a hundred and fifty-eight years.

In April 1980 seventeen men ended it, and the boundary was not abolished but redrawn: Krahn instead of Congo, ethnic favouritism instead of caste favouritism, the

concessions reaffirmed within days. Then Taylor, then two wars, then a peace agreement, then a commission with a mandate that began in 1979.

This morning the Executive Mansion is occupied by Joseph Boakai, a Kissi from Lofa County, and the seal of the Republic still says THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US HERE.

There is no first innocent order in this study either.

The strongest case for the thing, stated at full strength

Now the discipline requires the case against everything above, put as strongly as its holders would put it, and it is a serious case.

These were people who had been property. Not metaphorically. Enterable in an inventory, mortgageable, devisable by will. Lott Cary bought himself and his children out of hired-out wages for about eight hundred and fifty dollars. Colin Teague, a saddler, did the same. They crossed an ocean to a coast where three of every five of them died within a generation, and they did not turn back, and out of that they made a state that lasted a hundred and thirty-three years.

They gave land to people who had been land. Twenty-five acres and a town lot to a family, in fee simple, heritable, by deed, in the grantee's own name. Forty acres and a mule was ordered in America in 1865 and revoked within the year. In Liberia the schedule was smaller and it was actually conveyed, from the first year, and never taken back.

They kept the flag. When Europe divided Africa, Liberia was not on the table, and it stayed off it for the entire colonial period — with no army worth the name, no money, no protector obliged to fight for it, and territory being sheared off its borders by Britain and France. It survived by diplomacy conducted by men whose grandparents had been slaves. It was, along with Ethiopia, the only thing on the continent that was never anyone's colony.

They excluded the excluders. A constitution that barred white men from citizenship and from holding land, enacted in 1847 and honoured for a century and a half, on a continent then being carved up by white men.

They abolished slavery in their founding document, in 1847, eighteen years before the republic that had expelled them.

They gave sanctuary. Sixteen thousand people with nowhere else to go were received, landed, deeded and made citizens. Five or six thousand Africans taken off slave ships — the children of the *Pons*, seven hundred and fifty-six of them in one day, all but twenty-one under twenty years of age — were landed naked and destitute, and were fed,

schooled, named and absorbed so completely that their name became the name of the country's governing class.

They proved the charge false. Teage's whole oration of 1846 answers it: they said we could not enjoy liberty without running into anarchy, and here is twenty-four years of liberty regulated by law. And the demonstration was received: a Leeds Quaker printed the president's inaugural in London and carried it to the Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar as evidence of the capacity of Negroes. For a century that state was the standing refutation of an argument used to justify slavery everywhere.

They were held to a standard nobody else was held to. The Christy Commission arrived within five years of the Fernando Pó traffic becoming notorious, cost Liberia its president and nearly its independence, and Britain proposed to take the country over — for conduct that the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Portuguese Angola and São Tomé had run longer and larger without any comparable consequence. President King called it malicious propaganda used by the colonial powers to discredit the republic, and as a description of the asymmetry he was right.

And they were reforming. Tubman extended the franchise to the interior in 1945 and to women in 1946, built schools, opened the country, brought indigenous men into offices — under no metropole's compulsion, on his own initiative, over twenty-seven years.

And what replaced them was immeasurably worse. Whatever the Americo-Liberian order was, it did not kill a quarter of a million people. Its successors did.

Every clause of that is true and this study has established most of it.

The answer, without flinching

Take the concessions first and do not hedge them. The self-purchase was real. The mortality was real and it was catastrophic and it fell first on the people who built the thing. The deeds were real, and they are the largest entry in the benefit column of this study, and they are the reason the order held for a century and a third among its own people without a standing army. The sanctuary was real: sixteen thousand people and six thousand recaptives is not a gesture. The survival of the flag was a genuine achievement of statecraft against long odds. The double standard of 1930 was real, and the powers applying it were doing worse and knew it. And the successor's violence was worse, and Module 11 declined to charge it to this arrangement.

Now the arithmetic.

On the demonstration. The claim that the Republic proved black men could govern is true, and it is also its own answer. The proposition was demonstrated to a jury that lived abroad — Module 3 traced the Declaration's addressees, *the nations of*

Christendom, named at the top and the bottom of the document. And the exhibit was built out of people who were never asked. The native African appears in the founding instrument exactly once, and not as a party but as a witness: bowing down with us before the altar, *declaring* that from us the light of Christianity has gone forth. A demonstration of capacity conducted upon subjects does not refute the charge that was used to justify subjection. It reproduces it, and offers the reproduction as evidence.

On the deeds. They cannot be credited apart from the exclusion, because they are the same clause. Article V, section 12 provides that no person shall hold real estate unless a citizen; section 13 restricts citizenship to persons of colour; section 14 voids any private purchase from the aborigines; and Article I, section 11 gives the vote to every male citizen of twenty-one possessing real estate. The instrument that conveyed a freehold to a former chattel is the instrument that excluded the country's population without naming it. One cannot take the first four words of that machine and leave the rest.

On the sanctuary. It proves capability, which is exactly why it convicts. The Republic could absorb an alien population completely, and did — the children of the *Pons* are the demonstration. It declined to do the same for the people ninety miles inland for ninety-seven years, and Module 4 established the difference: the recaptive arrived with nothing but himself and the Kpelle arrived attached to a country. The generosity was genuine and it was precisely bounded by the land question. An order that can admit anyone who has no claim, and no one who has one, has not discovered a limit to its resources. It has disclosed a rule.

On the double standard. It was real and it does not exculpate, and this module has to hold both at once. The Empty Column's finding explains the asymmetry exactly: a liberal power audits fastest where the finding is convenient, and correcting Liberia cost London, Paris and Washington nothing while correcting themselves would have cost a great deal. That is a fact about the auditors. It is not a fact about the Kru towns that were pillaged in retaliation for testifying, and the men who did the pillaging were not sent by the Foreign Office.

On what came after. That an arrangement's ending was catastrophic is the argument every ancien régime makes, and it has a structural answer rather than a moral one. Module 9 established that the order foreclosed competition inside its own hierarchy — 272 real votes in 1847, a president removed in 1871, and by 1927 a quarter of a million votes returned on a roll of fifteen thousand. An order that abolishes the only mechanism by which it could be changed short of being destroyed has not earned the defence that its destruction was terrible. The terribleness of the ending was a property of the arrangement.

The version of the case that deserves the most respect, and what it actually establishes

The strongest form of the argument is not any of the above. It is this: *they had no other option.*

And it is largely true. They landed with twenty-seven men able to bear arms when not sick, forty muskets requiring repair and one gun with a serviceable carriage. They had no metropole to appeal to, no treasury, no army, no way home, and a mortality rate that was killing them faster than the ships could replace them. They were surrounded by polities with no apparatus to inherit and by an ocean full of powers who would have taken the coast if it had been available. Everything the modules describe — the borrowed floor, the chief's commission, the tax in a currency nobody had, the concession, the loan that was a term of the concession — is what a party in that position does, and *Position Logic* says so before the research begins.

They did not choose the colonial toolkit out of malice, and they did not copy it. They arrived at it because the position poses a problem with a small number of workable answers, and they found the same ones Lugard found — and Lugard did not invent them either.

That is this study's final finding, and it costs something to state. If the instrument set were European, or white, or a product of a particular civilisation's pathology, then it could be renounced by renouncing that civilisation, and the men who had suffered it most would have been the last people on earth to build it. They were not. They built it within a generation, in their own names, under a constitution that excluded the people who had done it to them, on a coast where they were dying, and they believed — Teage believed, Cary believed, Roberts believed, and Tubman believed a century later — that they were building an asylum.

They were. It was an asylum. And *The Architect and the Inheritor* is the paper that governs here, because the thing that makes this case hard is not that the founders were hypocrites. It is that they were not. A thing that was built and then became real is more durable than a lie, and it does not stop being real when you find out how it was built. The Republic was authentically the settlers' country, exactly as Poro was authentically the interior's world, and neither fact cancels what the first did to the second.

What Liberia finally establishes for the collection is therefore the most disenchanting proposition in it, and the one with the widest application. **The machinery is not owned by anybody. It is what the position hands to whoever occupies it, and the evidence is that when the position was occupied by the people it had been used against, they produced it again, complete, without a European in**

the room and without meaning to — a hut tax, a frontier force, a paramount chief, a labour draft, a dual tenure, a standard of civilisation to be assessed by the party benefiting from a negative answer, and a formation withheld from the majority because forming them would have meant admitting them and admitting them would have meant owing them the country.

Lord Lugard recognised the machinery in 1934 because it was his. What he did not say to the House of Lords, and possibly did not see, is that nobody had given it to Monrovia. Monrovia had built it, out of the same materials, in the same position, for the same reasons — which is the whole argument of this collection, arriving in the one place where it cannot be explained away.

A note on sources.

Quoted exactly from public-domain primary texts. Lord Lugard's description of the commission and of Dr Christy is from the House of Lords debate of 25 April 1934, as printed in Hansard. Lugard's count of the seventeen prior conquests of Hausaland and his claim of the right of conquest are quoted from this collection's study of British Northern Nigeria, which works from *Colonial Reports — Annual, No. 409: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1902*; the finding and the sourcing are that study's. The Constitution of 1847 — Article I sections 11 and 15, Article III sections 1 and 5, Article IV section 1, and Article V sections 12, 13 and 14 — is quoted from Huberich's literal reprint of the official text of March 1848, as in Module 9. The Declaration of Independence of 1847 is quoted as in Module 3. Ashmun's inventory of August 1822 is as in Module 1. The American Colonization Society's petition describing the recaptives of the *Pons* is as in Module 4. Article XII of the loan agreement of 1 September 1926 is as in Module 6.

Drawn from other studies in this collection, with their sourcing. The complexity variable, the settler override, the *Anopheles* finding, the Northern Nigerian and Kenyan comparisons, and the reading of Saint-Domingue as confirming rather than refuting *Elite Chaos* are taken from the studies of British Northern Nigeria, British Kenya and French Saint-Domingue in this series, and the findings are theirs. Where this module extends them — specifically the proposition that the settler override is a function of settler numbers and therefore of the disease environment, and the reading of Liberia as a settler order permanently too small to settle — the extension is this study's and rests on the mortality evidence set out in Module 1.

Paraphrased from reference material, credited and not quoted. The comparative history of the hut tax in Natal, Nyasaland, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Southern Rhodesia is from the standard reference literature on colonial taxation. Lugard's *The Dual*

Mandate in British Tropical Africa was published in 1922, after the Barclay reorganisation and the raising of the Frontier Force; the point that Liberian administrators did not work from it is an inference from chronology and is stated as one, not as a demonstration that no British administrative practice reached Monrovia by other routes — American, Sierra Leonean and League channels all existed, and the question of what Liberian officials read has not been researched here. The present occupancy of the Executive Mansion and President Boakai's Kissi origin and Lofa County birth are from current reference sources.

Contested and unresolved, carried forward. The single most important outstanding verification in this study is the identity of the Liberian Supreme Court decisions holding that the aborigines were entitled to the full protection of the constitution, flagged in Module 9; no case has been identified and the reports should be searched. The extent of the December 1821 grant, flagged in Module 2, remains open by nearly three orders of magnitude. The White House memorandum of 29 September 1979 used as the title of Module 10 reaches this study at two removes and should be checked against Dunn. The Christy Commission report itself has not been read, and Modules 4, 5, 7 and 11 all rest in part on summaries of it.